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By JEANIE DRAKE



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IN OLD ST. STEPHEN'S

A NOVEL

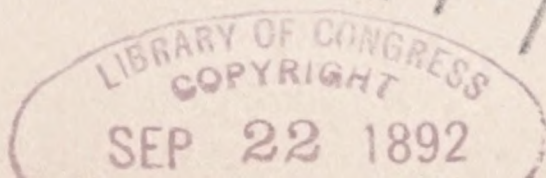
BY
JEANIE DRAKE



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PREFACE.

AFTER I had accompanied the remains of my beloved grandfather, to be laid by his command in the family burial-place at Woodhurst, by the side of his brother, I found on my return North that his personal belongings—his papers especially—were left to me to be destroyed or used at my discretion. It was natural that I, his youngest grandson and his favorite, owing to the strong likeness, doubtless, in face and manner, which I am said to bear to my great-uncle Miles, should believe—from the deep interest himself and his society always held for me—that these passages from his journal might not seem entirely dull to others.

The enjoyment that his company gave to me, however, was independent of his life before I knew him. So active, alert, and keenly interested in the issue of each present hour was he, that but for a ceremonious, old-time politeness, and his snowy hair, in striking contrast with his dark eyes and skin, he might have been a contemporary. The great, almost inconceivable changes of the last quarter of a century in his beloved south country gave me an eager curiosity to hear

of his youthful days. But on that subject he would not talk, turning me off always with a smiling "No, you shall not tempt me into a babbling second childhood and 'anecdotalage.'" I may write these things for you some day; but in the mean while tell me of the play last night. And is it worth my going to see? I remember Mr. Booth's father, and the son is much the greater artist."

It was with a heavy sense of loss that I came back from my last mournful journey with him. I know among my youthful friends no companion so congenial, no intimate, bearing, under great reserve of manner, so gentle and tender a spirit as my dear grandfather's.

MILES ASHLEY VANDERLYN.

IN OLD ST. STEPHEN'S

INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN all the world and Love and I were young, I did not really believe I should ever grow old. The ardent youth which confronted me in a mirror and coursed swiftly along my veins seemed myself, one and inseparable. It is not when the Olympic dust flies from the racer's car-wheels, or he wanders with Phyllis in the grove, that he can picture an inevitable day when, with dim eyes weary of such scenes, he will quietly await, by the side of the dark river, his passage over. One mental provision I made, however, in a vague way, for that shadowy future. I have seen my brother, after a hard day's hunt, lulled into involuntary slumber by an old lady's diffuse praise of the past; and I have myself suffered, sometimes, from the garrulity of age, for which the manners of my time insured a most respectful attention. So I early practised keeping an occasional record of daily scenes and incidents, and thus am enabled, now that I write myself "Senex" and feel inclined to prose, to do so in manuscript which may be readily dropped and with less discourtesy than an elderly babbler in his own person.

CHAPTER I.

WOODHURST, our early home, was a large plantation in South Carolina, nearly a day's journey by coach from what we always called the metropolis. On such a Sunday in spring-time, as I can remember, a little procession would be standing in front of the wide piazza of the tall red brick dwelling-house, in readiness to start for the parish church. There was the chariot, in which sat our cousin Betty, otherwise Miss Sherwood, mistress of the household since my mother's death; her pleasant round face, and hair still brown, looking out from the encircling glory of a new coal-scuttle bonnet with nodding plumes. Beside her was our little sister, Eleanor, and her nurse Maum Chloe in a stupendous handkerchief turban stiffened inside with brown paper, as we well knew who had watched the process. Then came two marsh-tacky ponies, ridden each by a small boy whose sturdy legs stood out straight from the sheep-skin. The younger, myself, was specially charged to mind Cæsar, the mounted servant in attendance, an injunction resented deeply, but silently, as it was my father's. On the broad steps stood the latter, his right fore-finger closed on his place of reading in a small black book, to be resumed on our departure.

"Now, Jim," to the driver, "take good care of Miss Betty. The mare seems a little lively this fresh morning. Cæsar, you keep your eye on the boys. Did you tell the people at the quarters that those of them

who wished could attend service? Yes? That was right. Good-by, little Nell." And the cavalcade moved swiftly down the shady live-oak avenue, half a mile in length, which led to the front gate. A Sunday stillness brooded over the place. Even the live-stock seemed taking a weekly rest from lowing, cackling, or grunting. A peacock wheeled his gorgeous train awkwardly out of our way, doves fluttered and cooed drowsily about the pigeon-house, and high overhead, against the blue sky, swept and circled in graceful flight a solitary turkey-buzzard. Where smoke curled slowly from the negro quarters, could be seen the hands enjoying in their cabin-doors the hebdomadal pipe of ease, and the women busied, in primitive style, with their offspring's toilet.

Two of these pickaninnies ran a pattering barefooted race before the chariot and held the gate open for our egress. Brothers, evidently, and as indistinguishable to a stranger as two black peas; but I knew very well it was my Castor, who showed his white teeth in a meaning grin, as he ducked and muttered something, and a playful blow of Miles' willow switch was aimed at his own little henchman, Pollux.

"Boys! boys!" cried Cousin Betty from the chariot, "we will be late." And Cæsar hurried us on.

"What'd Castor tell you, Anthony?" inquired my brother. "Blue-jay's nest in the tallest poplar this side the creek. We needn't hurry coming *back* from church, coming *back*, you know, Cæsar," persuasively, "and supposing we were a good ways behind Cousin Betty, we might get that nest."

"No, sah!" decidedly. "No, Mas' Miles, not while yo's wid *dis* nigger. Yo' pa done tole me fer keep my

eye on yo', an' I gwine *do* it! An' 'tain't gwine be een de top o' no poplar tree, bud-nestin' on *Sunday, yeddy?*" with slow emphasis.

Well, the jay's nest would keep; and in the mean time there were two miles of road to be traversed through the pine forest, gay here and there with snowy dogwood-blooms, or trailing yellow jessamine, or Cherokee roses. Gray Spanish moss waved everywhere in the spring breeze. Wild violets and elder-flowers smiled at us in vain, and we wondered to hear Cousin Betty protest that she must have a posy on her way back; but every sassafras bush, or chinquapin, or gnarled grapevine was noted for future reference, each in its season. We thought we saw a black snake glide into a dark thicket of cypress and myrtle; we were sure we spied a squirrel run up the trunk of a big magnolia.

While our ponies went splashing through a shallow part of the creek in the wake of a sparkling shower scattered by the chariot-wheels, we caught sight of the blue-jay's nest, and farther on of a mocking-bird's, and again a wax-bird's. Over all was the delicious aromatic atmosphere of the woodland. The bliss of childhood is unconscious, if not ungrateful; but to an old man treading for many years since the brilliant streets of a distant crowded city, a fancied breath of that piney breeze has sometimes brought a fierce and sudden pang of homesickness.

Our narrower path crossing soon after the great highway, we began, that is to say, Cousin Betty began to exchange salutations, formal but very friendly, with the occupants of the various chaises and gigs and with numerous riders; and, presently, we reached the little

brick church standing in the midst of a clearing among the tall pines. Todd's Creek Church, it was called, from a Scotchman who had once lived there, traded with the Indians, and died, leaving only his name to be remembered. It had a small wooden belfry, much in need of paint; and, in its rear, a straggling grave-yard stretched back into the forest. In front were grouped people from miles around, their vehicles and saddle-horses tied to trees in every direction. By the time our own ponies were fastened up, with Cæsar in charge, the bell-ringing cut short various interesting discussions on politics and crops, and all flocked sedately in. Once inside our high pew, with benches running around its four sides, there was nothing to interest a small boy. The lion and the unicorn fighting for the crown on the British coat of arms over the chancel were old acquaintances. Also the faded mural tablet commemorating our great-grandfather: "John Wharton Ashley, Landgrave of Carolina under the Lords-Proprietors, etc." A "Mudgrave," Dick Northcote had called him once, saying that his own grandparent, being a "Cassock," was much finer; for which Miles had given him a black eye. Also, we had spelled out, until we knew by heart, other inscriptions stating that "George Heart-suck, returning from London, on the well-known Brig the *Charming Nancy*, Giddings, Master — had been Captured by Pirates and Destroyed, with All on Board;" and that "Andrew Kettleband being Set upon by Foot-Pads in the Streets of Charleston on July 8th, 1783, was foully Murdered. A Button picked up and identified as belonging to one of these villains was under Providence, the Means of bringing the Entire Gang to Justice."

The monotony of prayers was broken for a moment by the apparition of a charming child's head, which peeped and smiled at Nell over a neighboring pew, and then disappeared abruptly as though its owner were hastily pulled down. The minister's mounting into the old hour-glass pulpit was the signal for drowsiness, to which I was yielding, when a heavy foot-step sounded in the aisle, and a pair of remarkably keen eyes under shaggy brows, glancing past our cousin and Miles, seemed to rest on me. Then their owner subsided somewhere, but not until I had noticed the wide crooked scar, disfiguring the left side of his face, and that he wore his iron-gray hair long and tied back with a black ribbon.

"'Tis Lismahago!" whispered I to Miles, having a surreptitious knowledge of that hero.

"What?" said Miles, who never looked into a book indeed, surreptitiously or otherwise, if he could help it. There was another interruption later in the sermon, for the minister had just said: "On this point, my brethren, it is evident that David thought——" when down came a sudden shower of rain, and every man in the church hurried out at once to see to his saddle or girth-cushions, as the case might be. Dr. Lovegreen had probably forgotten about David before they came back, for he went on to another point of his discourse, and I went to sleep.

They were singing the closing hymn when I waked to find Maum Chloe pulling up our starched ruffles, and handing us our stiff little beavers with bands and buckles. A new voice, loud and harsh, which now filled the church with its discordance, could have been no other than the stranger's.

Outside again, acquaintances commenced or resumed their chat. The pretty child who had spoken to Nell inside, and who was named Dorothy Winter, came up to compare notes, with many a glance of her bright eyes and coquettish wave of her curls. But neither Miles nor I thought much of girls at that time; and were more interested in Dick Northcote's new boots.

"I lost one of the tassels in the chaise," said he with affected indifference.

"Did you ride with your father and mother?" I inquired; "we came on horseback."

Miles' grin at this made Master Northcote's black brows go up scornfully.

"In low shoes! I thought *gentlemen* always rode in boots!"

To avoid the painful admission that we had none, it was necessary to hear Cousin Betty calling us. She and two other ladies were discussing a servant's illness.

"I have a sovereign remedy for such disorders," declared Cousin Betty. "I use nothing else with our people—Flugger's Pills and Boluses and for a tonic afterward, Flugger's Bitters. Our Peter came from Edisto with the myrtle fever two months ago, and they cured him completely. You get them down in Charleston from Sergeant Flugger's widow, over the haberdasher's, on the left side of Blackbird Alley. If you will let me send you some——"

"Thank you," said Mrs. Winter dubiously, "we have had great satisfaction with Cockle's Pills——" and here the tall stranger walked up and addressed Cousin Betty, taking off his hat and remaining bare-headed while he stood.

"Have I not the honor of speaking to Miss Sherwood? Yes? I met you last when you were a very little girl. I was attracted to your family group by one who looks like a young friend of those days, Anthony Ashley."

"It is his son, sir—Anthony Cooper Ashley."

"Madam, the likeness is extraordinary. But I have not named myself—Colonel Homer Virgil Milton"—bowing—"at your service, and well known to your parents."

"They often spoke of you, sir, and I am glad to meet you," said Cousin Betty, with a fine courtesy in which the skirts of her pelisse inflated themselves, balloon-wise, around her plump figure. "There is an extra seat in the chariot. Will you not drive over to Woodhurst, dine with us, and see Mr. Ashley?"

"'Tis an opportunity I cannot afford to lose, madam, and as my boy is with me—here, Primus," to a negro nearly as old as himself, and as quaint-looking, "take the mule home, I will not need him, and," a semitone lower, "do not keep my dinner, I dine out to-day. Now then, this is, I suppose, another son of Mr. Ashley's. Young gentlemen, I am happy to make your acquaintance," and upon our taking off our little beavers, as we were taught to do, he waved his antiquated hat with a curious cock to it in the air, and laying it on his breast, bowed low once more. Whereupon my heart clove to him, and I was vexed that Miles should agree with Dick Northcote, who called him "an old quiz" and "a figure of fun." The chariot rattled on again, Nell and Maum Chloe being now accommodated with a bench drawn from under the seat. We rode after, in the order of our coming, and

I do not recall any incident in the homeward way except the starting of a rabbit. Cæsar was wildly excited in a moment, and rose up in his stirrups.

"Fo' God!" he declared in a hoarse whisper, his eyes bulging out, as the rabbit skurried through the undergrowth, "ef 'twasn' fer Miss Betty, I'd git dat rabbit!"

"On *Sunday*, Cæsar!" I cried maliciously, and he had no explanation ready.

My father was sitting with his book on the oaken bench running around the piazza when we reached the house, and as he came forward to meet us the faintest expression of surprise on seeing the unexpected visitor appeared. The latter was ceremoniously assisting Cousin Betty to descend, and his appearance was certainly calculated to cause surprise at first sight. Six feet high; his hat and coat of a long-past fashion; his hair tied in form of a queue, contrasting with his face brick-red and with that remarkable scar; and his muscular legs, clad in knee-breeches and silk stockings, displaying no special beauty of form, but quite the contrary. The astonishment changed into recognition as my father neared him.

"Surely I remember Colonel Milton," he exclaimed, holding out his hand.

"Your remembrance of me is wonderful, sir," said the colonel, "considering your tender age when you last saw me."

"You made an impression on my youthful mind," said my father, smiling. "And now, I hope your thirst for warlike glory is at last appeased—and you mean to stay with us."

"I have come back, sir, like an old war-horse, to lie

down and die in my native pastures. I find the kitchen on my small place—all those cursed red-coats left—comfortable enough. You know, of course, they burned all they could, and that was saved by chance. It has two rooms quite large for a soldier accustomed to tents. Old Primus has been faithful—I found him there—all the years I have been off fighting in foreign lands. I'll do very well there with my pipe and him. You know Primus?"

"Everybody knows Primus," replied my father, leading the way to the piazza bench. We heard no more just then, being taken upstairs, to have our Sunday suits laid by for the week to come.

"And Eleanor must have some 'Milk of Cucumbers' on her face, Chloe," said Cousin Betty. "The sun has freckled her to-day." Then Eleanor wailed on Miles declaring that juice of cucumbers must surely turn her little nose grass-green, and being shaken by Chloe for "'teasin' de chile." We were just downstairs when the dinner-bell rang, at one o'clock precisely, and we followed our elders into the dining-room. Great logs were blazing on the big brass "dogs," though the windows were open. Everything was shining; the polished oak floor; the mahogany sideboard with its load of cut-glass and solid silver and knobs of brass and glass; the table appointments, and pleasant glimpses of out-door greenery through the bowed shutters which tempered the clear spring sunlight. My father had been to the attic for his choicest Madeira with which to do honor to his guest.

"This, now," said the latter, after a few moments of silent enjoyment, "is a famous terrapin"—he said "tarrapin"—"stew. I have tasted nothing like it

since I dined in Carolina before. It is food for the gods, madam."

"I am glad you like it, sir. Did you enjoy the sermon, to-day, colonel—Colonel Virgil?"

"Milton, madam, but it is no matter. Yes, certainly, though I regret that we shall never know what David thought of that point."

Cousin Betty sighed decorously, and my father bit his lip: "You have not always contrived to hear a sermon on Sundays, colonel?"

"No, sir, unfortunately. After my last campaign with our General Washington"—here he stood up ceremoniously, then sat down again—"I served in the Low Countries, and in Egypt, in regiments without a chaplain, sometimes; sometimes with one so graceless and reprobate that I have had occasion to say to him: 'Sir, I am a profane man, myself; but I never swear in the presence of ladies, I'll be damned if I do!'"

"I wish I could have known the great Washington!" cried Cousin Betty precipitately. "Castor, be careful with that fly-brush!" for Castor, standing behind the colonel's chair, was, in his absorbing interest in the latter's conversation, carelessly dusting him with a brush formed from the peacock's last year's tail.

"I was taken to see him once," said my father, "when he visited Charleston. He had a fine face, but a little cold—or so it seemed to a child. He stroked my hair while some of the gentlemen told him that Cornwallis was occupying the lower rooms of our house when I was born in the upper story. But he was more inclined to talk with interest of a visit the ladies of Charleston had paid him in great numbers and brilliancy the day before. He said 'twas an

unprecedented honor for him to receive from the Fairly Fair, and he should never forget their distinguished condescension and gracious urbanity."

"And he was right, sir! by—ahem! he was right! He was a soldier and a gallant man. Let us drink his health!" and he arose again to do so. "Madam, this pilau is excellent." Miles kicked me under the table; the colonel certainly approved of the Madeira. "I have tasted of the cookery of many countries, both in towns and camps; and though compelled to acknowledge the French the finest cooks when well equipped, the darkey can accomplish more with less of a *batterie de cuisine* than any other. Of course, madam, my remark does not apply to your very complete establishment; but there is my Primus—I have tried him with only one saucepan and a gridiron, and he is hard to beat, hard to beat! Thank you, I will finish with a little Jamaica and just a pinch of the Maccabaw"—taking it from my father's snuff-box, lying open on the table. In this there was a spring, which being now touched it proceeded to play "The Star-Spangled Banner," faintly but clearly, and the colonel with much gravity and his head on one side beat time in the wrong places.

It was a huge and malodorous pipe which he smoked in the shade of the piazza vines after dinner in company with my father, who tolerated but did not use tobacco in this form. As for Miles and me, we were set by Cousin Betty at a window in the parlor to our usual Sunday afternoon reading, on which she would sometimes examine us. 'Twas "Jenks' Devotions, Prayers and Offices of Devotion for Families, by Benjamin Jenks, late Rector of Harley in Shropshire, and

Chaplain to the late Earl of Bradford." I can only hope that the feeling with which we regarded the late Benjamin Jenks did him no harm, wherever he was. On this occasion, we dropped him at once upon Cousin Betty's disappearance, and gave ourselves, unreservedly, to the talk outside. This was a colonel, indeed! a hero, who, not content with the battles of the Revolution, had spent his days since in fighting all over the world. George Heartsuck was nothing to him—anybody could be "destroyed by pirates" who got in their way. And Andrew Kettleband tried to run, no doubt, from the foot-pads who slew him.

"This is a fine place of yours, Mr. Ashley," said the colonel, "a d—d fine place, by——"

"I fancy the children are somewhere about, colonel," my father answered pleasantly. "Miles and Anthony, you may take your book to the end of the piazza. You use, I am sure, the same regard for them as you do for women. *Virginibus puerisque*, you know."

"Certainly; but when you speak Latin to me, Mr. Ashley, I beg you will translate. My dear old father, Peter Milton, gave me my name intending me for a classic scholar and a planter. And I have forgotten every word of Greek and Latin he flogged into me. As for planting, I have but an acre or two left around the ruins made by those cursed Tories and Hessians. Infernal hounds!"

"Miles and Anthony," said my father gently, for we had slipped gradually nearer along the benches, "I will excuse you. Go to the other side of the piazza, and stay there."

"I am now sixty-five, sir," I next heard the guest say—Miles and I had settled that he was a hundred

—"I like to think of spending the few years left me beside my native Santee, and near, if not to old friends who are mostly dead, to their children. You are like your father, sir, as your younger boy is to you, and both of you dark like the picture of the Landgrave I saw over the dining-room mantel. The other must be like his mother, who was a fair beauty, I am told. I could find it in me to envy you your family circle—but what has a scarred old rover like me to do with such matters? There was a widow in Brussels, though, once—if a soldier had time to court——"

"Anthony," said my father, in a quiet, low voice, which went through me nevertheless—'twas only I who had dared to draw near again—"you may go to bed." And I went, without a word, my head held stiffly upright to keep from crying, a sound of the colonel's vain pleading going with me. Oh, what a glorious afternoon to be wasted in one's room! It was but a little while, however, until my dear Miles, his handsome, boyish face glowing in the sunset light, ran in out of breath with a book. "Here," he said, "I dare not stay a moment, or father will miss me, for the Winters and Northcotes are coming up the avenue. But I snatched a book for you off the parlor table, and now I must run down." It was "Jenks;" but that was but an unlucky consequence of his hurry. 'Twas his affectionate thought for me that cheered my lonely evening.

CHAPTER II.

THE colonel soon settled down, for us, into an intimate friend and a valued neighbor. In his renovated kitchen-rooms, christened "The Camp," visitors were warmly received; the elders with good Virginia tobacco and Holland gin or English ale mulled, when desired, with the red-hot poker; the youngsters with a sweet potato baked in the ashes and a glass of milk. Or, better still, we were invited to share his mid-day meal, a rabbit stew, or broiled cat-fish, caught and perfectly prepared by Primus. Soon every day that we did not visit him was likely to see the colonel strolling up and down our piazza, waiting for my father to come in from the lower plantation, and humming most unmusically:

" Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!
Malgré les mutins tout réussira!"

Or standing before the mantel in the dining-room, looking up at the fine picture of John Wharton Ashley, in velvet and lace and his hand on the hilt of his sword. 'Twas on this latter occasion that I heard my father say:

" You seem, colonel, to have enlisted my boys—all the boys in the neighborhood, indeed—under your command. It is a gratifying circumstance to me that they can associate profitably with a gentleman of your wide experience and observation." The colonel made a

low bow and my father did the same. "Provided," he went on slowly, "that you exercise the same remarkable self-restraint with them, in certain matters, that you do with ladies."

"Sir," said the colonel, slightly confused, "it is a bad habit, and I may have already offended once or twice in that way. But for the future, for the pleasure of the little fellows' company, I am willing to promise that when I need such relief to my feelings with them, I will take it in French. I can swear," he added, with modest pride, "in nearly all the modern tongues, if only you do not ask me to do it in Greek or Latin."

"I will not require that," my father assured him, smiling. And the colonel kept his word. The stories—embellished by the waving of a real and fearsome sword—of Princeton and the Cowpens, Alten Kirchen, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Waterloo, to which we listened, fascinated, were now interjected with many a "morbleu!" "ventre-bleu!" or "mille-tonnerres!" which made our blood run cold with a sense of mystery. I am constrained to add that my eager acceptance of his offer to teach me French, and faithful study of that language, were due primarily to a desire to know what was meant by "Ventre-Saint-Gris!"

It was not long before Dick Northcote ceased calling our hero "an old quiz" and began to beg us to take him to "The Camp," which we did, though often at feud with him, by reason of his disagreeable satiric remarks. Miles, however, liked to be with him, he was so active and enterprising in out-door games; and his cleverness and unrestricted run of his father's library made me find him a not unattractive companion.

Besides, he was our nearest neighbor; the Northcotes' Oaklands being to the right of our place, the Winters' Fairview a mile farther on the left.

Our education proper was conducted at a little grammar school, near Horse-Shoe Creek, called the Academy. Under the very old teacher, who died about this time, and his assistant, the lad Billings—known as Tom out of school—our path had been the primrose one of dalliance, with abundant leisure for gunning, fishing, swimming, bird-nesting, and the colonel. Then came a short reign of terror for the boys of St. Stephen's parish, with a New England scholar, called Sterne, whose name was mild, indeed, compared to his discipline. After a spirited encounter—making me think of Bonaparte and the Duke of Wellington—between him and the colonel, on the subject of a flogging he wished to administer to me, the colonel marched me home and explained to my father:

“Mille diables! sir, the man was drunk, and is often so, I am told.”

“It must be looked into,” said my father gravely. “He brought the boys on wonderfully in their classics. But if he resorts too often ad amphoram, Anthony, you must remember parva decent parvam. Run away, now.” I went with round eyes of wonder. Inquiry developed the fact—from Tom Billings—that amazing quantities of Falernian—otherwise Holland gin—had been consumed in the teacher's little dwelling, and that he was never quite sober, save by accident. He disappeared from our midst and was seen no more.

The only memorable events of this summer spent, as usual, in the cooler air of High Rock, were the death

of our old coachman and the completion of Eleanor's and Dorothy's cross-stitch samplers, which received great praise and were sent to Charleston to be framed. The first frosty days found us again at Woodhurst, roaming the place with Castor and Pollux and the dogs at our heels. Primus resumed his embassies from "The Camp" with freshly captured fish or game, the acceptance of which contributed to his veteran master's self-respect among wealthier neighbors. We caught sight of him one afternoon, as we crossed the stable-lot, coming from the forge.

"Hi! Primus! Primus!" setting up a simultaneous run and shout, which were unheeded, Primus being engaged in jerking his little donkey out of the way of Cousin Betty, driving in at the gate, and urging the unoffending animal: "You Squash! you raskil! git outen de way!"

"Never mind, Primus," said Cousin Betty kindly.

"Pass on, my missus, pass on," quoth Primus with a flourish of his squirrel-skin cap and an exaggerated copy of the colonel's bow. "Squash and me, we allays waits on de ladies."

"Come up to the smoke-house, Primus. I have a fine Virginia ham I want the colonel to taste, and some of my blackberry brandy when he is indisposed."

"He well dispose to *any*, missus," Primus explained earnestly, "but he *ginnally* takes *rum*. He sen' he complimuns now, an' dis fish, an' say, as 'tis gwine be a moonlight night, effer yo' would let de young gemmen an' some o' de boys offen de place go on a possum hunt, he'd tek care of 'em. I got a fus-class coon-dog, missus," persuasively.

"Go out at night! oh, I think not, Primus," said

Cousin Betty doubtfully, getting down from the chaise.

"Scusin' de libbutty, missus," said Primus craftily, "dat's a moughty putty hat o' yourn, an' moughty becomin'. It teks my eye, fer sure!"

"Yes," said Cousin Betty, quite pleased. "I do think, Eleanor, that Madam Durang's bonnets are vastly becoming, and of a most genteel fashion. 'This one she calls 'Mrs. Madison's Taste,' after Dorothy's godmother, Dolly Madison. I shall get your winter hat from her when we go to town; but"—checking herself—"what are such things but vanities? Here, Lucinda," to her maid, "take my bonnet and pelisse and bring me my cottage hat and curricule cloak. After I get Uncle Primus the ham, I must go down to the quarters and see after poor old Venus' rheumatism. Boys, you may tell your father that I think Primus would take good care of you, and Cæsar could go, too."

"And Pollux, Cousin Betty?"

"And Castor, cousin?"

"And the boys from the quarters?"

"Ask your father," who agreed to our going under certain stipulations. And oh! how long it seemed before the moon rose and the hour of starting came. Then the impatience while extra coats and capes and caps were fastened on us—for the nights were crisp and frosty now—by our cousin and Mammy and Lucinda. There was a throng of negroes and dogs waiting for us on the road, and the colonel and Primus and the "fus-class" coon-dog joined us by a cross-cut from "The Camp;" the veteran entered into everything with the liveliness and zest of twenty years. Then into the thick of the

forest, autumn leaves crackling under our feet, the resinous smell of pines strong in the air, torches smoking and fitfully illumining in patches where the full moon failed to penetrate a leafy thicket. Up to the knees, sometimes in marsh-mud; pricked, unheeding, by sharp leaves of Spanish bayonet or scrub palmetto; struggling manfully through bush and briar, and—ha! what was that?—straining the ear breathlessly to hear—and then a wild, joyous chorus of barking and shouting—and 'possum is treed! The strokes of an axe on the clear cold air, and down comes a tall tree crashing, and the dogs, all in a snarling, worrying heap, are on their prey. Oh! the delight of the first part of that night! and oh! the fatigue of the latter part! I remember sitting down at the foot of a persimmon-tree, with a dim idea of mounting guard over the fruit, so delicious now, until the twins were at liberty to climb it; and then—I remember no more until I heard the colonel saying to Cæsar at our avenue gate: "Poor little fellow! he was tired, pardieu! Carry him to the house, Cæsar." They had taken turns in carrying me since I fell asleep.

It was a day or two after the coon-hunt, when coming in from seeking chinquapins, Castor and Pollux as usual following, Cæsar called to the latter:

"You, Castor an' Pollux, massa want yo' in de liberry!"

This was an unusual summons, the house-servants, women and children, being mostly governed by Cousin Betty. We ventured to follow and stood in the doorway, scenting trouble for our boys. My father, looking very stern, did not seem to see us, but took up a cane from his writing-table.

"Castor and Pollux, as I was riding past Horse-Shoe Creek this afternoon, I heard your voices uttering words so coarse and profane that I was shocked. I do not permit such language on my place, and I am surprised your young masters would suffer it in their presence. I am going to give you both a whipping."

"Oh, no! massa, please, massa! I ain't said a wud dat I 'member!" from both twins, with an appealing look at us, an ashy tinge stealing over their little black faces.

"Father," said Miles, stepping forward at once, his head erect, though a deep flush of shame stained his cheek, "*you* know—of course, you know, that 'twas I spoke so."

"You, Miles! It seemed your voice, but I chose to think that my ears deceived me rather than that 'twas possible my son could use such language. Castor and Pollux, you may leave the room and shut the door. Take off your jacket, Miles." He took it off without a word, his blue eyes wide and fair hair waving off his forehead. My dear Miles was so handsome that in boyhood and afterward I have often seen strangers turn to look at him on the street. My heart beat very fast. We had often been caned at school; for it was an age of great severity to children, both at home and abroad, but my father had never yet lifted his hand to punish either of us. I could not bear it, and stepped between them.

"Father," I said, looking up in his face, "if one of us is punished it should be I. Miles would never have known the words if I had not read them to him out of a book yesterday."

"What book was that?"

I mentioned the book, the name of which I do not give here, for reasons which seem to me good.

"I thought I had told you not to take any of those old books from the library without asking me first."

"It was not from the library, but from Cousin Betty's books, which she lets me have."

"Betty has probably forgotten, if she ever read," my father muttered, half to himself, "most of the fiction in vogue in her youth and mine. Society has grown more decorous since, if not really better. Miles, put on your jacket. Anthony, give me your word to read no book but your school-books without first showing it to me."

"I give you my word, sir," said I, putting a rather grimy hand into the one he extended. He still held it as he pointed to where our fair young mother's picture hung over his table. He bade us look up at the portrait, so well painted that the eyes, large and blue like Miles', seemed smiling into ours from a gentle, gracious face with blond hair raised high and falling in ringlets on the white neck.

"If your mother were alive, my sons," he said, in the soft tone he always used to speak of her, "would you like to utter such words in her presence?" We hung our heads. "Trust me, though you may never find it the belief or practice of the world, that what is not fit for a lady is unfit for a gentleman. Now you may go." He detained me a moment after Miles. "Anthony, I would not have excused Miles but that I fully believed you. Your different character and taste for study give you influence with your elder brother, and you must be careful to make it a good one. Whatever you may hear, always believe that.

purity and nobility of language and conduct well become a brave man and a gentleman. And oh, my little Anthony!" his sallow, dark browed face softened with the tenderest look, "I *want* you to be a gentleman."

I leaned my face on his hands and sobbed out many promises, which I have kept more or less faithfully as strength was given me. And at last the looked-for smile appeared, and he dismissed me, calling after: "I will take care that you have interesting books enough."

That night, for the first time in my young life, I sent off the drowsy Castor, who generally nodded, turkey-wing in hand, before the roaring logs in our bedroom fire-place until I was asleep, and pondered how I might become what my father wished. The light had risen and fallen many times, dancing about the polished floor and tall four-poster with its dimity curtains and valance, and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John carved on the head-board, before I stood, all in white, on the mahogany steps leading up into bed.

"Is it a ghost?" asked Miles, half-waking.

"I was just thinking, Miles," seriously.

"This is the time to sleep and not to think," said he, turning his curly head over on the great frilled pillow smelling of lavender and such weeds, and was snoring again in a moment.

CHAPTER III.

FROM annoying comments of visitors that we were getting to be "monstrous tall and proper lads," which seemed to surprise them, as though it were an unusual thing for boys to grow, it must have been some length of time after this, when we were all seated together, one tempestuous evening, with the noise of the wind and rain without increasing the sense of snugness within. Together, I say, but Miles and I were, really, before the dining-room fire, giving a lesson in reading and writing to Castor and Pollux, seated on their heels beside us, each with a box of "fat" wood splinters at hand, with which to keep up the strong firelight. This was a task of teaching that, having begun with great enthusiasm, we might have tired of but that my father insisted on perseverance, both for our sakes and in justice to the twins. Through the wide door opening into the library we could see the party within in bright relief from our firelit room, on account of the many twinkling candles set in brass and silver and among sparkling glass prisms. The colonel, surprised by the storm and persuaded to remain over night, was deep in a game of backgammon with Cousin Betty; little Eleanor at my father's knee with a bit of tapestry-work, and the latter reading. The great hall-door opening let in a gust of cold and moisture with Cæsar, who stood on the rug, rain-

drops glistening on his lion-skin great-coat and cap. He gave my father, who went out to him, a package.

"'Tis de mail, sah. One o' de boys een de quarters heer de horn an' run out to de coach; an' knowin' yo' was expectin' it, I brung it up."

"'Expecting'—yes, for just ten days," said my father. "'Tis but a small matter, after all; a package for you, Betty, and two or three letters for me. Our correspondents seem to have reached our own conclusion, that 'tis safer and swifter to wait and send letters by friends travelling."

"We were glad to have a paper from Charleston once a month, in my time," said the colonel placidly, holding a piece suspended. "It was owned by the widow of the former editor, and she used to beg people through its columns to send her their subscriptions sometimes, as she really could not find time to go around to each in person. A shame by—ahem! by George! I remember seeing one number that got through the lines when Balfour held the city. It was faintly printed on wrapping paper, dark blue; but I was only twenty years old then and could make it out. Is it still called the *Charleston Gazette*, and Whig in politics of course?"

"I leave *you* to make out its politics," my father smiled. "Its name is now the *Charleston Gazette*, but it *might* be the Vicar of Bray. Here is the prospectus: 'Somewhat of a political creed will naturally be expected from us. We, then, do not hesitate to avow that we revere and shall ever defend those sound, safe, and moral principles of government which best preserve the freedom and promote the happiness of all men in society.' Then they are afraid that this is too

strong; so it ends: 'Decisive as we thus are, we shall not, we trust, incur the imputation of dogmatism.' 'Decisive as we thus are' is particularly good."

"And what is the news?"

"Editorial about the queen's trial."

"Sacre bleu!" cried the colonel, "but we are lucky, here in America, to have escaped the rule of that Hanoverian animal of a king," and he took some prodigious pinches of Maccabaw, followed by the waving of a huge bandanna.

My father assented fully. His opinion of George the Fourth was quite as low as the colonel's, but he took his snuff more quietly. He went on reading from the paper. "Description of a youth of fifteen missing from home. 'By inserting the above, the editor will receive grateful thanks of agonized family.' The editor would probably prefer something more substantial. 'A house to rent on Savage's Green, with view of River and James Island. Desirable residence for genteel family, and a never-failing cistern of water on the premises.' 'William Ross, Jun., having been elected and commissioned Col. 8th Regiment Cavalry, is to be obeyed and respected accordingly, by order of the brigadier-general!' 'Miss McCrea is reported to have been tomahawked and scalped by Indians last month in Ohio. This should elicit something neat from our local poets!' How pleasantly he alludes to the trifling incident! Oh, Fons Bandusiæ! Is it you who will supply inspiration for that theme? 'The marriage of Colonel Darius Hobson, U. S. A., to Miss Chloe P. Mackawis, or the Jumping Rabbit, a belle of the Chickasaw tribe, which we noticed in a recent issue, was, we are now informed, a hoax. Could we discover

the originator of this wretched joke, and also of the remark that delay in transmission of our holiday number was probably a *Christmas gambol*, they should be prosecuted!' Ah! colonel, here is, indeed, great news on the first page, which I must have missed! Lafayette's visit to the city is fixed for next week. We will really see at last the hero of two continents. 'Arrangements for reception of nations' guest.' " He ran them over hastily. "Ancient Artillery, Cincinnati, South Carolina Society—I belong to them all. What do you say, Betty? Shall we take the coach and travel to town to honor the marquis and please ourselves?" Castor and Pollux were instantly abandoned to their fate; so was the backgammon board.

"I don't know," said Cousin Betty, all in a flutter. "I have nothing to wear, or Nell either, to make a genteel appearance."

"Madam!" cried the colonel, walking about in high excitement, "my Continental uniform is, no doubt, in good preservation"—Miles nudged me—"but I would see the illustrious marquis once more if I had to go in rags, by——" Here he swallowed so large an expletive that it nearly choked him.

"We are without a proper coachman," pursued my father, "since the loss of poor Jim, but Cæsar can drive us down, and I may find one there. Here is a promising advertisement: 'Wanted to sell Myself, but not for life; say one year: not as first-rate Coachman, but as one that can drive two horses well in a coach, provided he is allowed the following food for his horses, viz.: $\frac{1}{2}$ peck corn, $1\frac{1}{2}$ peck oats per day for two horses and as much Timothy Hay as they can eat, with food for myself accordingly. Should this meet

approbation of any one advertising, I shall expect to see it in *Gazette*, and will then make myself known to Massa!' This was surely taken down verbatim from dictation. He must be an original."

"I should call him a lunatic," cried Cousin Betty.

"I will look into it, nevertheless," said my father, making a note. "A coachman who thinks of his horses before himself is not to be found every day."

The whole neighborhood was in a commotion on the morrow. The Copelands were all going to town, and the Overstreets and the Winters and the Northcotes for next week's event. Dick Northcote, who admired no one but Napoleon, said "'twas not worth the trouble of going, but his mother would be disappointed."

"Unlike Tony Lumpkin," dryly commented my father, who heard him, "you can't abide to disappoint other people." Dick looked at him doubtfully, but said nothing. The colonel's impatience led him to mount his mule, to which he now gave the name of "Hurrah," in honor of the occasion, and off he went before any of us.

Our coach was at the door on the appointed morning, its four horses as eager to start as we, Cæsar holding the reins and one of the boys riding postillion on the near leader. It seemed late to us, who had been up "racketing," Mammy said, but we said packing, since midnight; though actually so early that the gang-driver's horn could be heard summoning the hands to the field. Castor and Pollux were in the depths because they were not taken, and Maum Chloe cross for the same reason,

Lucinda having been adjudged sufficient for attendance on Cousin Betty and Nell. Boxes and bundles were piled all over the coach; a large one and handsome it would be thought even now, though cumbrously heavy with russet leather padding, panelled mirrors, and venetian blinds. All were in but our cousin, my father standing waiting for her with his hand on the coach-door. "Betty! Betty! Betty!" he cried, with rising vexation.

"Yes, yes. Now, Mammy, are you sure I have everything down?" reading from her list: "Honey and Windsor wash balls; lavender and orange-flower water; Poland starch; aniseed cordial; race ginger; Madras handkerchiefs; punch strainer; chocolate mill and chafing-dish to be mended, and new snuffers and tray for kitchen to be bought——"

"Cousin," my father interrupted firmly, "you have had three days to make out your list; and now we will have to leave you."

The coach-door slammed behind her, Cæsar cracked his whip, and off we went in the early dawn along the narrow road skirting Todd's Creek and Horse-Shoe Creek, and out into the great high-road, and along that to Charleston. 'Twas intended that the only break in our day's journey should be for lunch taken at the Hen and Chickens Tavern, formerly the Crown Prince, about half-way; but we were compelled to stop once more, when the sun was setting, near a bend in the road, to repair some slight damage to the harness. My father walked on a few steps as Cæsar and the boy busied themselves among the wheels, and suddenly, as though arisen from the earth, a man on horseback, with hat down over his eyes and face half-buried in his collar,

confronted him, a pistol in each hand, and commanded him, with hideous oaths, to deliver up his valuables.

Cousin Betty gave a scream, seconded by Eleanor, the two servants' teeth chattered in helpless terror; my father was quite unarmed. One of the highwayman's pistols pointed at him, the other covered the rest of the group.

It appeared that we must lose all we had with us.

"If I am not to stir, how can I get you the valuables?" asked my father calmly.

"Empty your pockets!" The contents of the many-caped great-coat pockets did not please him. "No! no papers, d—n you! I don't want them or bills, either. Where's your purse? Open it. Gold? That'll do. Don't come near, or—throw it on the grass, near my horse. Now make your niggers and those boys bring out everything from the coach, and be quick about it, or I'll give them a shot or two, anyhow, G—d d—n them!"

Cousin Betty looked on in speechless misery as all the carefully prepared packages were taken out and piled on the grass, and only uttered one piteous moan as she saw the box which held her much-prized topazes, in which she had meant to shine at the Assembly Room, deposited with the others. While busying myself with the rest, I had been mentally seeking a helpful idea. The coach was now emptied of all but the mahogany case of pistols under the seat. It was a dainty-looking box of unusual shape, bought in France, and handsomely enamelled on top. I took it out, still under the robber's eye, and called to my father: "The gentleman will not want this dressing-

case of Cousin Betty's. He can have no use for a lady's tooth washes and toilet necessaries."

"Surely not," said my father, addressing the man. "I suppose she may keep that?"

The ruffian hesitated. "Come here!" he cried to me. "Open it and let me see, d—n you!" I advanced, and pretending to fumble with the lock, was nearer to my father than to him, when it opened with a snap, and the former, springing on it, had seized a pistol. Something went singing past my ear, the highwayman's aim being now confused, and the next moment he dropped from his horse, shot by my father.

"Now, Cæsar and Bob," sharply, "you may help. Bring the rope from under the box-seat. Tie his hands securely—so. Now, Bob, put him on his horse, and you mount behind. He must go as far as the Bull's Head with us. Do you want a pistol? No? Well, he cannot hurt you now."

So the valuables were restored to their places, and we went trundling along as before, only with our postillion in the rear, mounting guard over a wounded highwayman.

"Thank you, Anthony," said my father, "for your quickness and courage in carrying out your thoughts. 'Twas better than either of you boys trying to shoot; for you would most likely have missed." Then he took a nap. Cousin Betty and Eleanor were saying their prayers and Miles and I talked in excited whispers.

"O Anthony! what a pity the robber's bullet didn't take off a piece of your ear. Dick Northcote means to have a scar like the colonel's when he grows up."

"'Tis a pity," I admitted, feeling my ear regretfully. "Never mind! Dick Northcote's father never shot a highwayman; and I don't believe *he's* ever *seen* one!"

It was nearly dark when we reached the Bull's Head Tavern, not far from town. The yard was full of the long white covered wagons of farmers and country people come in during the day. We left our prisoner there with Bob until a constable could be sent out for him; then past Tivoli Gardens, crossing Boundary Street into the other unpaved streets, dangerous enough with their dim oil lamps far apart; stopping to leave letters intrusted to us at the stage office, Society Street, where the mail stage, just in from Columbia, was disgorging numerous passengers. On its way-bill was the announcement of Lafayette's coming next day, with an addition, *apropos de botes*, that "the Genius of America yields to that of no other Country on Earth, whether it is directed to discoveries in subterranean depths or soars in ether amid fields of azure." I committed this to memory while my father was busy in the office, thinking it very beautiful, and could not understand why he should wear so amused a smile on reading it afterward. Then on we went again, down King Street, turning sharply into Queen—we did not change the names of our streets, as did the French, on a change of government—past the stables at the sign of the Rising Sun, where our coach would presently be put up, and stopped, at last, before the Planter's Hotel, opposite the Huguenot Church, where the colonel had engaged rooms for us. Lights were twinkling from all the windows, but that did not help the street much until the hotel servants ran out

with lanterns, and the coach, emptied of us and the luggage, rolled off round the corner.

"Glad to see you, sir," cried the landlord, who had known my father all his life, "and Miss Sherwood and the children. Here, Tom, take these things, and show Miss Betty her rooms, some of you others! It's a long time since you've been down, Mr. Ashley. I have no tavern here at present," suggestively, "but the waiters can go out and fetch whatever you need."

"Thank you, I have brought my own wine," said my father. Then we were glad to take our stiffened limbs across the tiled hall and office and up the winding stairs, and to our rooms, with their cheery fires. The colonel was out at supper with friends of his, "jolly fellows," he said, next morning, with a wink; but Dick Northcote was on hand, and ready to die with envy, we knew, on hearing of our exciting adventure.

The city was early awake to the roar of artillery salvos, the beating of drums, waving of standards, and the tramp of men marching up the Meeting Street road. There they were to join the guard of honor escorting "the marquis, in a landau drawn by four gray horses." The colonel, rigged out in his famous continental uniform, only forty years old and much too tight, marched with the veterans; and my father with the Cincinnati Society.

"Hurry, hurry, children," cried Cousin Betty, who with all the other ladies in the house wore a silken sash, with a copperplate likeness of Lafayette engraved upon it. We struggled through the crowd on Broad Street, all in holiday attire, and found our places at windows reserved, opposite the City Hall. Then a tedious wait, enlivened for us, when Cousin Betty was

not looking, by the dropping of nut-shells on the heads below. At last, drums, music, endless lines of citizens and soldiers; and then four gray horses and—the hero himself. The landau was met at the City Hall by the intendant and wardens. The former made a speech and the marquis a reply, of which we did not hear much.

“He is still a handsome man,” sighed Cousin Betty.

“How old he is!” cried Miles, disappointed, “and they called him ‘the gallant young marquis’!” Indeed, it was a long time since the marquis had needed to wear powder in his hair.

The procession moved on and we children saw of Lafayette no more. But our elders went to his reception and to the theatre, where he had a box; and to a grand ball given for him, where Cousin Betty wore her topazes. And finally they saw him off at the wharf with the same honors which had greeted his coming, the colonel having the pleasure of showing him the very spot on Broad Street where the victorious Continentals stood during the evacuation while the British forces embarked. “And I do not think Lafayette even *saw* the colonel’s uniform. He is perfectly well bred,” said my father severely, who had caught Miles and me laughing at the venerable toggery.

The advertisement noted in my father’s pocket-book had not been forgotten, and that afternoon he came in, announcing:

“Well, Betty, I have bought the coachman for a year. You need not stare, cousin, it is true. The eccentric advertiser turns out to be a darkey who had purchased his freedom and set himself up in a little livery stable; and then between a troublesome son and

no head for business, he has spent his money and run in debt, and is so perplexed he can think of no plan but selling himself again; that is, for a year, he explained, with privilege of renewal. 'I kain't tek care o' myself nohow, massa,' he says, 'an' I'm jes a-wearyin' fer de country!' So Jupiter and I have come to terms, and Mr. Oldfield is making out the papers."

"'Tis the most extraordinary arrangement!" pronounced Cousin Betty.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. OLDFIELD, my father's lawyer and Mr. Northcote's, had his rooms on St. Michael's Alley, and thither they let us accompany them when they went on business next day. We stood talking in the alley and listening to the watchman in the steeple overhead call the quarter hours and sonorously proclaim that "all was well" until they came out, when we had a message to give that Bob had followed us to transmit. 'Twas to the effect that the highwayman now in jail was suffering grievously, and would my father go round and see the governor.

"I will go with you; I may be of use," said Mr. Oldfield.

"And the boys may go back to the hotel."

"Let them go with us, my dear sir," said Mr. Northcote, the kindest of men, but a trifle pompous, which we boys supposed to be occasioned by his having served a term or two in the legislature—"let them go with us. It will help expand their youthful minds and show them the inevitable consequences of evil-doing. You will remember how the Spartans utilized the example of the drunken Herlots."

So we followed, and through narrow and muddy streets and lanes to get there, only the principal thoroughfares having sidewalks then. It was a marshy and ill-smelling quarter that held the gloomy, dark building we now entered; and I marvelled to hear the governor con-

demned to live in such a place greet us cheerily and pleasantly. The first visit was to the wounded highwayman. "You boys will stay here until we come back," said my father, remembering, no doubt, his ribald tongue. But he was speechless and unconscious when they saw him. "He took a bad turn in the night," said the governor, leading the way back, "and will not last many hours. He has been in jail before and is an old offender, so you need not look so grave, my dear sir, that your shot has proven fatal."

"Better that, after all," said my father, "than bear testimony that would hang him."

"We have several here will hang next week," said the governor. "Shall we visit the condemned ward?" This time we followed. Down a dark corridor and into a large damp room, which had a space inclosed within a grating. Behind this were seven men sitting on the floor or standing, while outside were about fifteen others playing at ball and with greasy cards, thickening the gloomy air with profanity and coarseness.

"'Tis those inside," said the governor, in a low tone, indicating each brutal and vicious figure as he spoke. "That one for house-breaking; that one for forgery; the tall one, there, for shoplifting; he only got a paper of pins and some handkerchiefs before he was caught. And the pale, gentlemanly looking man to the left for passing a counterfeit promissory note. The evidence against him was slight, and he maintains his innocence of the counterfeiting, but he was found guilty and he will swing." The look on this last man's face was ghastly in the extreme, and he took no notice of our presence. But his companions were incited thereby to

forced bursts of obscene merriment, as horrible as would be the laughing of a corpse.

"I hear Dandy Roger is to be twisted next week, too," cried a ball-player.

"Those who bowl must expect rubbers," answered the man addressed inside the grating.

"A kick and it's all over. What's that to a brave lad, d—n it!" said another.

"If I'm kept swinging for more than an hour," declared one ruffian, with pretended solemnity, "I'll leave directions for an action to be brought against Jack Ketch." On this there was a roar, amid which we retreated.

"No, thank you," said my father, to the governor's invitation to visit other wards. "Let us get out into the fresh air. Seven of them—good God!" he continued when out again in the muddy streets, "and one of them, he says, for stealing about five shillings' worth."

"What would you have, my dear sir?" said Mr. Oldfield. "The laws here, which make but eight crimes punishable by death, are mild to those in England."

"I consider, sir," said Mr. Northcote, "that softening the rigor of justice has been prejudicial to the cause of order and virtue. Any further moderation would be simply offering a premium to vice. The way of the transgressor should be hard."

"You hear?" said Mr. Oldfield, with a shrug. "And there are many who agree with Mr. Northcote. 'Twas only last week that Mr. Wright stood up in Congress and moved that a recent court-martial should not be paid for its services because none of the accused were put to death."

'Twas a relief to forget all this when, on reaching

the hotel, Mrs. Winter and Cousin Betty were found getting out of the coach after a shopping tour, and mightily pleased with their bargains. There was a new boy, too, in the portico, from Edisto, whose father our fathers knew, and who made friends immediately, offering to show us his new jack-knife. He was chubby and freckled, with a turned-up nose, and immensely good-natured. He presented me with his old knife and whispered: "Your sister's a pretty little girl, and she's nicer than the other." This was a novel idea, and I went upstairs to look into it, followed by the others. The girls were trying on new bonnets and tippets before the mirror, and Cousin Betty was puzzling over her change.

"Let me see," she said musingly, "milk of roses, essence bergamot, and Hungary water from Formento and Zuccotti—um—um—silver tongue-scraper and belt-clasp from jeweller's; amethyst seal to be marked with arms and motto; bonnet, tippet, and cap from Madam Durang—she has moved, Cousin Anthony, to the corner of Dutch Church Alley—Taberary curtains, from London, trimmed with gold lace and Parisian fringe——"

"I thought we had curtains enough, Betty," from my father.

"Oh, but these were *such* a bargain, cousin! They must have been smuggled. They can be put away in lavender for grand occasions. Taffeta and sarsnet ribbons, sprigged mull muslin with thread lace; open-work robe with petticoat and collar to match; spencer à la Jeanne d'Arc—that's a pretty thing, Mrs. Winter; a Caroline cloak for Nell—a lace veil and two tuckers, besides the orders for the plantation and the books.

Change lacks two shillings and sevenpence I cannot account for, but it doesn't matter. How do you like the bonnets, cousin? Nell's is the 'Little Primrose' and Dorothy's the 'Lily of the Valley,' both monstrous genteel, I think, Mrs. Winter; but 'Mrs. Madison's Taste' is most becoming for you and me."

We strolled out together in the late afternoon, when the ladies were still tired from their morning's outing, down through Church and Water Streets to the Battery, and there looked out at the water and talked of Blackbeard, who once blockaded the town, and whose men went swaggering and stumping about the shops and streets until the indignant but terrified townspeople furnished all the supplies needed. Northcote declared we were standing on the exact spot where Captain Steed Bonnet and his pirate crew were hanged in chains. "Their spirits often walk here," he affirmed.

When we returned Colonel Milton was sternly affixing a notice to the Long Room door at the hotel which stated:

"The owner of a green Umbrella, taken from the back-room in this House, has waited with Patience in the Expectation of its Return. Description of Umbrella will not be given; but Description of Person who took it may shortly appear to his Disadvantage." Then he strode away, and we saw other notices.

"Fine, fat, green Turtle at Carolina Coffee House. Families supplied with Soup and Steaks, by sending early."

"Supper of the Ancient Artillery at nine promptly, in the Long Room of this House to-night. 17th Rule will be strictly enforced against defaulters."

We would be there. It was our bedtime; but a little coaxing and bribing of Cæsar, who was to wait behind my father's chair, had gained our point. The judicious arrangement of a screen—and who would know?

"Dat's ef yo' all keep still," said Cæsar, shaking his woolly head doubtfully. "I spec' I git a lickin' ef 'tis found out."

We were all four boys squeezed in a corner behind the screen, as still as mice and provided with a bottle of "Imperial Pop," or "Aerated Lemon Water," to drink one toast with. The banquet commenced with turtle and a prodigious amount of wine to flavor it. Then, with more solid material, came inquiries and compliments and dissertations on crops and politics. The animated clatter of knives and forks began to make us look doubtfully one at another, and wonder if bed were not better than this Barmecide's feast. But after awhile, when serious business was over and dessert and wine only remained and the servants had departed—Cæsar with a warning cough—it was more entertaining. "The Union" was drunk first; then the memory of "The Father of his Country," standing—we would have drunk this, but had not yet succeeded in drawing the cork of our bottle—"The President," "The Heroes of the Revolution," "The Army," "The Navy," "Our Allies."

In the reply to this there was an allusion to Bonaparte, "the swindler of Ferdinand, the murderer of D'Enghien, the scourge of Europe," which caused Richard Northcote to give a very imprudent kick to the screen. My father replied to the toast to Commodores Perry and Decatur, he having served in 1812, and we joined in the applause. There were several

songs sung, such as "Bonnets of Blue," "Oft in the Stilly Night," and "Shining River." The colonel, who sat near the screen, volunteered: "Malbrook *s'en va-t-en-guerre*," and indulged, besides, in his specialty to an extent sufficient for the entire army of Flanders, little suspecting who were behind him.

All this while we had been struggling, each in turn, with our obstinate cork, and it was now in Tom Broadacre's hands. The toast, "Our late illustrious Guest," was proposed, "who has, after all," said the speaker, "treated us shabbily, for we gave him freely in welcome what we could, and he has gone off, *coram latronibus*, with all our hearts." This was very neat, and we looked anxiously at Tom Broadacre to see if the cork had come. A final tug, and—it had, unfortunately. The "Imperial Pop" was much "poppier," to coin a word, than we had suspected. It went up to the ceiling with a bang, carrying the cork, which then descended on the colonel's head, a stream of lemon-water following down his high stock.

"D—nation!" cried he, jumping up and upsetting his chair. My father rose and pushed the screen to one side, leaving us revealed, in a condition of temporary paralysis, Tom Broadacre, with his mouth wide open, holding the empty bottle extended. A burst of inextinguishable laughter followed from the banqueters, and my father said cuttingly: "I hope you have enjoyed yourselves, young gentlemen. Though unexpected, your presence has been quite a feature in the evening's entertainment. You may retire now." And as we filed out, dejectedly but quickly, another peal of laughter pursued us to our rooms and into our dreams.

We kept our eyes on our plates at breakfast when

Cousin Betty remarked: "The banquet must have been a pleasant occasion, gentlemen. I heard a vast deal of laughter." My father's lips parted, but the friendly colonel interposed at once:

"Madam, the banquet was delightful, but those cursed mulatto serenaders, who played under our windows afterward, disturbed me fearfully. I scarcely slept a wink. If they come again, I promise you I will break the heads of the caterwaulers with their own instruments."

Of course we took the earliest opportunity of apologizing to him for last night's misadventure.

"'Twas nothing at all, my boys, nothing at all," he assured us good-naturedly; "made me jump and took a little of the starch out of my stock. But if I were *you*, my dear fellows," with a touch of seriousness, "I would not attend an affair of that kind again, *uninvited*. No, I really would *not*. What was that sticky stuff in your bottle? Imperial Pop? That is a brand I am not acquainted with, though I know most. Not intoxicating, I hope? You remember the wretched fate of poor Sterne?" The colonel had a headache himself this morning.

Cæsar, on hearing the story of the "Imperial Pop," instantly, with all a darkey's tact, diverted his master's attention from his own share in the matter by reporting that 'twas necessary to get Bob out of the guard-house, where he was now lodged. And 'twas through imprudence in letting himself be caught by the patrol last night without a written pass from his owner, after the nine-o'clock bell and drum-beat, which was contrary to the rules for slaves.

It will scarcely be believed that after our experience

of dismal scenes at the jail we should voluntarily seek one even more dreadful. But the fact is, the hanging fixed for a certain day was public—the gallows being erected already outside the jail-yard; and there was so much talk of it as a holiday event among the negroes, and indeed some of the whites, that we resolved to go without mentioning the matter to our elders. I was reluctant at first; but when Dick Northcote sneered at me as a “girl-baby” and Miles and Tom were so eager, rather than be left behind I went.

It seemed like a Fourth of July celebration, crowds streaming along the streets and lanes converging toward the hideous wooden machine, high in the bright sunlight, and little stands with cakes and beer doing a thriving business along the route. We could not get very near, so dense was the throng, but stood in the mud some distance off—two creeks here intersecting the region—and looked and listened to the people talking, laughing, and cracking nuts and jokes. Dick Northcote found rather a high stump and let Miles share it with him.

A great iron bell clanged and the prison gate opened. “They’re coming!” Then dead silence, filled up again gradually with whispers and comments. “’Tis the forger!” said Dick when the first figure mounted the ladder. In a few minutes it was over. I kept my head up and my face set in that direction, not to be called a “girl-baby,” but felt sick and queer. The next man said something which made the crowd laugh. He, too, was presently dangling in shapeless, hideous degradation; and then I saw nothing more until I opened my eyes in the jailer’s wife’s room, where Tom and Miles had carried me. Immediately

on my return to consciousness Tom ran off to rejoin Northcote; but Miles, though wondering at me, stayed and held my hand, the noises without, so significant, making me shudder from head to foot.

"Your pa'll be here soon," said the good woman. "I've sent for him. Boys oughtn't to come to hangings." However, the crowd had partially dispersed before he was found and, with Mr. Northcote, made his way to us.

"I'm all right now, sir," said I, standing up at once on meeting his anxious eyes. "I was only a little giddy."

"Just so," said he dryly. "If I had known what a care you boys would have been, I should have left you at Woodhurst. Miles, you should not have ventured to come to such a place without asking me. As for you, Anthony, having come, I am ashamed that you should be so weak. You would make a poor soldier, with that sort of squeamishness. I suppose had you been with me on the deck of the *Decatur*, slippery with blood, you would have made yourself useful, fainting away comfortable in some corner like a lady."

But he knew the difference and laid his hand gently enough on my head. This was one of the rare occasions I ever heard him allude to having served as volunteer under Captain Diron, of the *Decatur*, where he got that wound which caused the halt in his walk, of which we boys were so proud. He took care we should leave the jail by a private door with our backs turned to the horrid scene. But in this court-yard was a man, standing on the pillory, a ludicrous sight, though painful, his head, hands, and feet sticking out through the apertures where they were fixed. A

placard overhead read: "James Blake mate of the sloop *Lawrence* of this port convicted of Misprison of Piracy, sentenced to Pillory. Fine and imprisonment."

"A painful sight," murmured my father.

"I must differ from you, Mr. Ashley," replied Mr. Northcote loftily. "'Tis a useful detergent example to the young. I quite approve of my Richard's wish to attend this execution." He generally did approve of Richard, who boasted, indeed, that he could twist his father round his finger. If our parent was severe, as I thought at the time, he was also good enough to look himself to our amusement, giving up for that purpose engagements to dinners and suppers, both private and public. He took us to a grand display of fireworks, advertised, "weather permitting," at the Bathing House Retreat, East End Laurens Street, where there was "a piazza for the Reception of Ladies and Gentlemen, gratis." But you were expected to purchase milk-punch and syllabubs. And to the theatre on Broad Street with "Three doors, all opening outward"—the Richmond Theatre fire was still talked about—to see "The Iron Chest; or, The Mysterious Murder," in which the gloom was somewhat lightened by Master Legge's graceful performance of the sailor's hornpipe and the Highland reel in costume.

Our last treat was to Mr. Miller's reading-room and "cash store," at the sign of the Franklin's Head, for us each to select what we chose as a gift. Cousin Betty took a bottle of "Napoleon Cologne," marked "very strong," for Lucinda, and other trifles for the house servants at Woodhurst. The little girls had new reticules and fans; the boys, ivory-handled riding-whips, and my father let me select a book besides,

in which choice all assisted me with their judgment. Tom Broadacre earnestly pressed on my notice: "A Circumstantial Account of the Cruise of the Ship *Louisa James*, Almeida, Baltimore to Buenos Ayres," relating at full length a mutiny of buccaneers, who composed her crew, by Chas. Fullerton, gunner's mate, to which is added "Confession of Robert Wolf, and account of Execution, along with Geo. Weeks, Printed, Published and Sold by Henry Cooper, Cheapside, London." Cousin Betty as strongly recommended a new novel by the author of a "Waverly."

"Let the boy choose for himself," cried my father, and ran over the bookseller's list to help me. "'Rasselas;' 'Gil Blas;' 'Pinkerton's Travels;' the 'Spectator;' Burns; Byron; Chapone's 'Letters;' 'Don Quixote;' 'The Scottish Chiefs'—we have all these; 'The Hungarian Brothers;' 'Thaddeus of Warsaw'—you have not that." So Thaddeus was borne affectionately away under my arm, and installed in due time as newest and highest hero in my already large collection of those stars.

There was material enough in this visit for a thousand Munchausen tales on our return to the plantation. And I wonder the twins' eyes did not come out, so far did we make them bulge with wonder at our stories.

CHAPTER V.

THE subject had been mooted while we were in town of leaving the girls there at school.

"I can ill spare my Eleanor," said my father fondly, "but she must not be entirely country-bred as to accomplishments."

"I am sure," cried Cousin Betty, "Eleanor can sew and knit and make tambour-work, cake, cordials, and confections with any girl of her age in the Union, besides reading and writing."

"Both of which come by nature, as we know," said my father, "but a few of the gifts of fortune would not be amiss."

"Mrs. Hamilton, from London, advertises," suggested Mrs. Winter, "that she takes every means to eradicate provincial errors in language."

"Confound her British impudence!" said the colonel hotly. "You can tell her we import our errors from the mother country, with almost all our other household furniture. Have you ever been in Lancashire or Devon, Mr. Ashley?"

"I spent four years in England," said my father briefly.

"I mean to learn the piano-forte with the criroplast," called Dorothy, hopping about gayly, like a bird—Nell was rather downcast—"and all the new dances and the guitar, and painting on ivory and satin

and velvet—and the flageolet! Can't I learn the flageolet, mother?"

"The harp is more suitable for a young lady," said Cousin Betty primly, "more graceful—and—and—poetic."

"No, I like the flageolet best," persisted Dorothy, and her parents gave in at once to the spoiled child.

On inquiry, Mrs. Hamilton seeming to be, apart from her British impudence, rather a desirable teacher, it was arranged that the girls should be sent down after their holidays to her establishment. 'Twas a great house with a high-walled garden, an old lamp keeping guard over the front gate on a back street, narrow and dark, but fashionable then when building space was less by reason of creeks. Out of that garden the pupils trotted sedately, two and two, only twice a week—once to church and once to Monsieur Fayolle, the dancing master's "afternoon assemblies," at the St. Ursula Concert-Room.

"And it is specially impressed upon them," said Mrs. Hamilton, "that no well-bred young lady would permit herself to be seen looking out of a window!"

Cæsar, my father's man, was to be married, on Christmas Eve of this year, to Lucinda, Cousin Betty's maid, which event made the holidays more than usually festive.

"I wish 'twas over," complained Cousin Betty. "Lucinda is no use at all now. She nearly let me come down this morning, *en papillotes*, without my cap; and yesterday poured cream and sugar over the hogshead cheese." The bride-elect went about with her head on one side, looking like a "pop-eye mullet," said Tom Broadacre, who had come from Edisto to

spend Christmas with us. Cæsar attracted our attention by putting his hands so frequently in his trousers-pocket that Miles asked him if he was afraid of pick-pockets.

"No, sah, no, Mas' Miles!" with dignity; "'tis my graveyard rabbit-fut dat I feelin' fer luck at dis 'spicious time." We had no service, just now, at our parish-church, ministers being rare in the country in those days; but a negro preacher was to come from a distance for the wedding.

My father presented the supper, which was laid at one end of the spacious barn; the other being reserved for the dancing. Whether "the quarters," where 'coon, 'possum with sweet potatoes, corn-cake with crackling, sausages, and such delicacies abounded, or the pantry with its cakes and cordials were the more attractive place was a problem we solved by trying to be everywhere at once; and Castor and Pollux laid up for themselves numerous whippings when any one had time to give them, with an I. O. U. on the spot in shape of a cuff. The way in which the new coachman, Jupiter, took the lead amused my father. He understood the care of horses thoroughly, and in course of time became so tyrannical that the family were only allowed to have the equipage or steeds selected by him for the day. He even tried to manage our marsh-tackies, but on that point we conquered. I may say here that he never left us; his entire purchase-money being laid up in the bank for him, and loyally offered to the family for their use when the fortunes of war seemed to him to make need possible. 'Twas as a fiddler, however, that his popularity among the negroes was assured, his first performance subjugating them completely.

"I kin beat him on de banjo, dough!" cried Pollux.

"An' I kin beat *you* jiggin'!" boasted Castor, pattering away with his bare feet.

The last touches were given the bride's toilet in Cousin Betty's dressing-room, who lent her a set of cameos and fastened on the veil and wreath with her own hands.

"You look lovely, Cinda!" we all exclaimed—and she showed her dazzling teeth, divining that this was more effective, in her case, than a blush. The groom went to his fate in a suit of my father's, an enormous white cravat, and with many a reassuring touch of his rabbit-foot. The speeches and toasts at supper were rousing enough, but 'twas afterward that real fun came. "Money-Musk" and "Old Dan Tucker"—what flings and swings and pigeon-wings! The floor shook. Games followed where one person stood in the middle; the others, holding hands, circled swiftly around singing:

"Oh, darkies, ain't yo' sorry, do, do, do!
I'm goin' upon de railroad, do, do, do!
Miss Sally, she lub sugar cake,
Miss Sally, she lub candy,
Miss Sally, she kin reel an' tu'n
An' kiss dis n'young man handy!"

which Miss Sally, leaving the ring, proceeded to do with affected bashfulness and sufficient frequency, making the air resound with smacks. To another osculatory game the singing accompaniment, having reference to a Charleston regulation, ran:

"Oh, de bell done ring, an' de drum done beat,
An' I'm in dis lady's garden.

Do, do, let me out,
Fer I'm in dis lady's garden;
I'll gib you fat 'possum fer let me out,
An' I'm in dis lady's garden;
I'll gib you sweet kiss fer let me out,
Fer I'm in dis lady's garden!"

Whereupon further smacks were resumed, to release a hapless, belated darkey from his fear of the guard-house. My father came in in the midst of this and promptly sent us off, each with a piece of wedding-cake.

The Christmas jubulations followed, with exchange of gifts and general mirth and dances and dinners among all the families on neighboring plantations. Foolish, but cloudless days! If I dwell on them, 'tis because the freshness of the morning is more tempting than the sultry noontide, with its fierce heat and sudden storm-clouds. What is there marks the flight of years like the difference in our enjoyment of Christmas? *Eheu! fugaces posthume!* there comes a day when we must nerve ourselves for the ordeal of a holiday, that we may not sadden others with our painful memories.

Shortly after this, the girls went away to the correct Mrs. Hamilton to learn deportment. At Easter my father said: "Now, Miles and Anthony, 'tis your turn. You have gone as far as you can at our country school, and 'tis time to think more seriously of your studies. How would you like to cross the sea and go to Westminster and Oxford, as I did?"

"O father!" I cried, "I would like it of all things!" but Miles said nothing then. At bed-time he came to my father and said steadily:

"Father, you know I don't care for books and such matters, as Anthony does. Why should I leave home and all of you for so long, and have you waste all that money on me?"

"I would wish the future owner of Woodhurst to be a man of cultivation."

"Yes, I know," simply, "and I am sorry. But I can do very well here in Charleston. Let me stay at uncle's and take lessons. I will study medicine later, if you think it would be useful on the place."

My father looked at him standing; his handsome face flushed and frank, blue eyes earnest; sighed once or twice, and consented. As for me, I was aghast at the idea of a separation from my dear old fellow, the constant companion of each hour; but became presently reconciled as the preparations for departure and anticipations of new and exciting scenes absorbed me.

Passage was taken for me on the "Fast Sailing Packet Ship *Two Carpenters*, Captain Handy," which had made the trip over in thirty-five days and was now lying at Benjamin Langstaff's wharf. Castor and Pollux came down, being permitted to see me off; and the former blubbered so wildly that his twin, though crying himself, was forced to soothe him by a kick or two, skilfully applied to a sensitive spot on his shins. Cousin Betty thrust "Pinkerton's Travels" into my hand as an appropriate parting gift; the girls waved their handkerchiefs when they were not wiping their eyes; Miles stood motionless beside my father and the colonel. When their dear faces receded from sight, as we left Benjamin Langstaff's wharf far behind, I must confess I hid myself behind a pile of rope and canvas, and did not emerge until the captain came by, when I

observed, with a jaunty air of manliness, that I believed sea-spray was apt to make the eyes red.

As this part of my record concerns our life in Carolina rather than elsewhere, I pass over the years spent in England.

I did not come out very near senior wrangler; but my progress in study, both at Westminster and Oxford, satisfied my father, and I was happy in his approval. That I was sometimes led or walked wilfully into my share of folly, I will not deny; and I have more than once felt a touch of the colonel's *tic douloureux*, both in head and conscience, when my father's face confronted me from the miniature in my desk. And two wretched months of suspense were passed, one year, between sending and receiving reply, with inclosure, to a certain letter of confession. It happened but once, my father's few remarks impressing me deeply.

Richard Northcote had chosen to finish his studies at the *École Polytechnique* in Paris; and while distinguishing himself by brilliant versatility, was also, rumor said, a leader in the wildest set of the Latin Quarter. Some of their adventures were talked of as actually disgraceful; but this was not necessarily true, as at twenty years, lodged in a garret or elsewhere, it is only requisite to chant "*Le roi d'Yvetot*" or "*Dum vivimus*" in the street at midnight to acquire a very bad reputation. Tom Broadacre, at least, found himself rusticated from Harvard for a practical joke, of which he wrote me in a serio-comic letter. He got through somehow afterward, having a facility both for getting in and out of scrapes, and announced his going home as a "happy escape from those musty old quizzes, Homer, Virgil, and the rest of the gang," and

he never "propposed"—that was the way he spelled it—"to renew his acquaintance with them." In this light, it seemed the clearest wisdom on Miles' part to be on excellent speaking and spelling terms with his own language, and not spend time unprofitably with the classics. 'Twas toward the end of my last year that I received the following epistles from home:

"CHARLESTON, S. C.

"MY DEAR ANTHONY:—Your last package of letters sent by the Brig *Lovely Kezia* reached us safely, having been but thirty days in passage. The Captain called with them himself. He was pleased to find our Madeira wine the finest he had ever tasted—as it ought to be, after being round the Cape three times. Seafaring men are excellent good companie for gentlemen, I make no doubt, but eccentricke in talk.

"The Limerick gloves you sent Nell were a perfect fit, and suited her new spangled gown sweetly, and my silver muslin caps are much praised, as of the latest mode, and vastly becoming. Your father was also much pleased with his present. As he will tell you, he has been elected to Congress, and must leave next month; but will make new arrangements at Woodhurst, during his absence. You will see, by this heading, that we are still in town. The girls are so much in love with gayety, their first season, that the Winters and I are held here—Lucinda being in charge at Woodhurst. I think you will be surprised when you see Dorothy. She has improved vastly, and has scores of admirers. Mrs. Hamilton admitted that she felt releaved of a responsibility when she finished and left. There are so many young men in that street—and one even pre-

tended to hurt himself by falling near the gate, so as to get in; but she had her coach take him home immediately. She is a woman of majesticke presance and very prudent, and, I hear, has had some of her poems published in the *Minerviad*.

“Our Nell too has her share of attention, and Tom Broadacre pursues her everywhere. But I shall be glad to get back to our dear Woodhurst next month, though I shall miss your father sadly. Now it is Balls, Suppers, and Assemblies every night, and Serenades towards morning when an old lady, like your cousin would be glad to sleep. Dorothy's head might be turned, but she seems to take all as a matter of course. Besides, her selection being maid—but I was to leave your father to tell you this *Great* piece of news, Only, I *will* say, that when she and Miles led the dance at the St. Urula Concert Room the other night, there was a buzz of admiration all over the room.

“I was glad you found time for another visit to Kent. Though I have never met my relatives there, I am still sensible of the Ties of blood and hope to see them hear some day. Present my respectfull complimants to them.

“The rest of the family are now writing you. Castor begged me to tell you ‘howdy’ for him, I think he will drive the negroes on the place wild with envy of his silver watch. Miles had to buy one for Pollux immediately and they both wear them Sundays, with a number of jingling brass charms. Hoping to hear from you as soon as convenient, I am, with prayers for your welfare,

“Your most Afectionate,

“BETTY SHERWOOD.”

My father's letter ran:

“MY BELOVED SON:—Yours of the 20th ultimo came to hand, and I was heartily glad to find both that and the Captain bearing news of your continued well being. Your wish to travel on the Continent, after leaving Oxford, meets with my entire approval. I shall now be absent from home myself, for some time, having been sent as M. C. to Washington, and, as Miles is not ready to assume charge as yet—not having finished his course at the Medical College—I have engaged, for the first time, a white overseer, Francis Doubleday, by name, a native of New Hampshire. I have had a comfortable cottage built for him, on the place, close by that clump of trees, you remember, near the blacksmith's shop. He mentioned that he had been married, about a year, to a girl employed at a factory in his native town: a simple, quiet person, from his account and may be useful. I had thought the Mustee Cato, whom I bought of Captain Marsden, might have been trained to take charge, under Miles, but dismissed the idea, he proving shifty and dishonest. Evidence of this was given recently, in town. Our stock of wine from Woodhurst, running unaccountably low, and Jupiter ailing, I sent to the small corner-grocery for a bottle of their best, for him. On tasting, it struck me as remarkably fine, and further tasting convinced me that 'twas my own old Comet Madeira. Your cousin laughed at the idea, as impossible. But so it turned out; and I was actually buying my own wine, which Cato had sold the grocer. I shall sell him, as he is too idle for a field hand, and too untrustworthy for anything else.

"I do not know if your Cousin Betty mentioned in hers, that Dorothy Winter has grown to be the toast of the town. 'Tis quite two years now since I wrote you of our celebration of Miles' majority. He has lingered in the city this winter on one pretext and another; but last week came and asked me to sanction his betrothal to Dorothy. The Winters and I both thought them young yet; but, otherwise, a match in every way desirable. And Miles, having our consent, is perfectly willing to wait and let the girl enjoy herself to the top of her bent. He does not sigh away as much time, as do others, under her windows; seems fairly rational, and if there is to be any confidential raving of hearts and darts, it is reserved for your sympathetic ear, on your return. Eleanor looks well, and is pleased, in a quiet way, with their junketting, but she and Betty will not be sorry to sober down at Woodhurst again.

"You will share my sense of loss at the death, in the country, of our friend and neighbor, Mr. Northcote. Richard was recalled from France, but did not reach Oaklands in time, and we did not see him, as he went at once to their place. I hear that he was unduly chagrined at the entire property being left to Mrs. Northcote. He has long known that he was but the adopted son of that childless couple; but, from a pecuniary point of view, it does not matter, as he is her manager and will undoubtedly inherit all. Nothing showed the good heart of our departed friend more than his constant, fatherly care for Richard.

"There is some excitement here over a railroad to be built as far as Midway. Great things are predicted of this new mode of travel: the Baltimore and Ohio R.R.

claiming, I hear, to be able to make the incredible speed of fifteen miles an hour. Of course, 'tis a newspaper exaggeration.

"I am pleased that the Sherwoods liked the turtles I sent over. You will go down to Kent again, I suppose, before leaving England. You have not mentioned if there are any fair daughters among the family. Ah! Anthony, if *you* ever write sonnets to a mistress' eyebrow—unlike Miles, you will masterfully insist that it shall be turned continually in your direction.

"Though most eager to see you, I must consent to a further separation, for a time. During which you have the constant blessing of

"Your loving father,

"ANTHONY ASHLEY."

The Sherwoods mentioned in both these letters were relatives of Cousin Betty's father, and whom my father used to visit when in England. There were several stalwart sons and but one daughter, quite a little girl, who looked like our Eleanor, but prettier, I think.

CHAPTER VI.

"'Tis too bad, Mr. Ashley," said Captain Handy, stopping a moment on the deck in his busy hurrying to and fro, "to be almost within sound of St. Michael's bells, and not see even the tip of the steeple; but," jestingly, "you have seen so many famous spires, in your wanderings for the last year or two, that you can afford to wait for this one."

"None that I longed for as I do for St. Michael's," cried I, for this was surely not the ideal home-coming after long absence, to be tossing off Drunken Dick Shoals, in a dirty sea, with an ugly Scotch mist obscuring sky and shore, and waiting helplessly until the aid sent for arrived. I was sharing the inevitable fate of "pleasant surprises," from the days of Agamemnon downward. Hearing that the brig *Sea Serpent*, with my old friend Captain Handy in command, was about to start on the trip across, I had run over from Paris and persuaded him easily to take me as sole passenger, thus forestalling my expected return home by a month. And of course we encountered rough seas and head winds, and lost part of our rigging, and reached Charleston harbor in a disabled condition, to be towed into port.

I gave another disgusted look at surroundings, and would have gone below to the society of "Quentin Durward," when a shrill whistle was heard and ringing of a bell, and a great panting and splashing, and the

smoke-stack of a little steamer worked its way through the mist, and we made out the *Robert Fulton* bearing down on us. The usual shouted colloquy and general noise over, their captain came aboard. Over the bulwark of the ship leaned a much-wrapped-up gentleman holding an umbrella over a feminine form beside him, the mist having now changed into a steady, drizzling rain. I might have fancied it Nell, but Cousin Betty would never let her out in such weather, and she was, besides, not nearly so tall. I knew, too, that they did not look for me until next month, so I idly speculated on the form and face of the adventurous unknown fair one, enveloped from head to foot in a long cloak—one of the capes, as well as the hood, held by a slim white hand well over her head as a protection against the salt spray dashing high over the rail. I started when the captain of the *Fulton* called: "Some friends of yours on my boat, Mr. Ashley." Friends? I was quickly over the side, leaving the luggage to be transferred at Captain Handy's leisure. The hands were all busy now, and the slippery, dripping deck almost deserted where the gentleman with the umbrella stood. I went forward doubtfully, and, his shield now lowered, discerned the homely, kindly features of Mr. Winter.

"Welcome home! Anthony, my dear boy!" he called. "I have not a hand to offer you at this moment, but that will do later. 'Twas by the merest accident that we heard of your being on the *Sea Serpent*—and none of your folks in town! Will you believe that this piece of mischief on my arm not only insisted on my bringing her out in the rain, but would not let me hail you or say a word until you came aboard?"

"He meant to surprise us, papa, and so I wished to treat him to a rival surprise," called a voice of music from the enveloping capes, which, on being dropped, disclosed a face framed in its dark hood like a rose in its leaves. The rain-drops glistening on the damask cheek and curling golden-chestnut locks blown about by the wind answered for dew. Was this little Dorothy Winter? The unveiling of her fair face seemed suddenly to brighten and illuminate the dreary day; the sound of her voice, like a chime of silver bells, to ring out a promise of joy and gladsome content to a dull world, where the rain it raineth every day. O beauty, wondrous gift! always new and surprising! If covering sometimes inward deformity or untoward fate, still what a power is thine! Dominating subtly, irresistibly, without an effort! How do the wise school themselves and others that there is no worth in aught but moral loveliness, and in a moment find themselves overcome, subdued, drawn where she will by one of Lyconnidæ's hairs!

The very sailors paused in their tasks for furtive and prolonged looks. That I was dazzled she must have seen, but took it as naturally as a queen the homage to which she is born.

"The cabin is a thought drier than this," said Mr. Winter, and into the cabin we went. His hands now free, the kind gentleman shook mine, both of them, over and over, assuring me of his pleasure in my return. "And, bless me, Anthony, how you have grown! but Miles—you will be surprised at his size! The Continental tour must have given you that bronze, and quite the grand air, eh, Dorothy?"

Dorothy had been busy undoing the innumerable

clasps of the long cloak, and now let it fall from her slender, rounded form, clad in a narrow shot silk edged with some gray fur. I will not say a word for the fashions of my youth. I will not even deny that they were, as is claimed, dangerous to health in their scantiness and clinging insufficiency, which, perhaps, resulted in what is now called a survival of the fittest among the fair sex. But when a woman's form is as perfect in youthful beauty as was Dorothy Winter's it could well bear the clasping sheath which covered, yet not shrouded, its charms. I, who had seen and met in foreign cities many noted beauties, had seen nothing comparable to this lovely creature, in her spring-time, illumining the little dingy cabin. She came toward me now, her white hands out, which I took in mine. "I think—perhaps—so old a friend—if you do not mind the taste of salt spray"—with a glance from under fringed lashes, she murmured. And I realized that I might touch the fair cheek.

"You are, oh! so changed," she cried, moving back a step. "Not so tall as Miles, but taller than your father, and more like the Landgrave's picture than ever. Have I grown, too?" demurely.

"To tell you what I thought of the beauteous apparition which greeted me on the deck," said I, bowing, "I cannot find becoming words without trenching on Miles' privilege of extravagance. Had he been in my place, he would say that not Aphrodite's self slow-rising from the foaming wave could seem more dazzling fair than Miss Winter shining 'mid gray mist, the sea-spray sparkling in her hair."

"He would say nothing of the kind, as you well know," she cried, elevating her dimpled chin in charm-

ing disdain. "Home-keeping youths have ever wits which they better employ than in paying elaborate compliments to old friends. Why do you look so? Is it because you fancied women never look into a book or quote by chance? And I am sure," with a magic softening in tone, "that Miles' brother is no mere acquaintance that he should call me Miss Winter!"

"Then let this Winter of your discontent change into glorious summer for a son of Ashley, sweetest Dorothy." She smiled, showing two other lurking places for Love to hide in, and stretched forth her fair hand once more, over which I bent.

"Heyday!" exclaimed Mr. Winter, bewildered. "What is all this flourish of trumpets and grand ceremony between two children who used to play and quarrel together?"

"Papa is jealous!" she cried, running to him and laying her head upon his shoulder. "He is quite a Turk, Anthony, and will let me look at no one but himself."

"Anthony will know how much of that to believe," growled Mr. Winter, like a good-natured bear. "In the mean time, you are blinding me with all this soft hair blowing in my eyes!"

If a vagrant fancy made me wonder if so she blinded Miles, 'twas instantly banished, for 'twas no affair of mine. We were well under way now. The captains came in, and the talk was general until we reached our wharf, when Dorothy must be cloaked again, and her small feet, in their gray kid-furred boots, protected by some wonderful little goloshes. I heard the two captains, on leave-taking, offer to bring her curiosities from the further Ind or elsewhere, so quickly had she subjugated them.

'Twas but a few steps to where the Winters' coach waited, and they drove me through the unpaved, narrow old street entirely familiar, and not unlike some Continental towns I had lately visited, through Vendue Range, where I stopped at the ship-chandler's, in case there should be anything from Woodhurst, and an apprentice ran out with my own last letter unsent; up Church Street, in sight of St. Michael's spire, and in at the old Planters' once more, the Winters driving on to their town residence. Too late that afternoon to set off for the plantation, I contented myself with having all in readiness for an early morning's start, and was resting at dusk before my fire when a note was brought me. I knew at sight from whom it came. Of delicate pale green tint, silver-edged, and sealed with wax of a darker green, and device of flying arrow and no motto.

"Dear Anthony," it read, "to-night is the last assembly of the season at the St. Ursula Concert Room. You must surely come, and prove to Richard Northcote that he is not our only glass of elegant and foreign fashions. There are, besides, a score of fluttering belles eager to see the young traveller. I mean to insist on papa's dancing to-night, and you will like to admire that.

"If these inducements fail, why, then, as Miles could not come down for the occasion, can you not take pity on disconsolate 'Aphrodite' (*en grand toilette*, this time, girdle and all), and act as his representative?

"DOROTHY.

"P.S.—If you could restrain your impatience for

Woodhurst until next week, we are returning to Fairview then, and could give you a seat in the coach.

“D. W.”

I seemed so stupidly giddy and confused since I had landed that I kept the messenger waiting some time for an answer; and then must have muttered half-aloud: “A good sleep will best cure my head,” for he said “Yes, sah!” with prompt acquiescence. Then I came to a decision, glanced once more at the perfumed note, dropped it behind the blazing logs, wrote and dispatched the answer, sending with it a parcel taken from one of my boxes and labelled Paris, and sought my couch not much later to have—God knows what visions come to me through the ivory gate!

’Twas by the mail-coach I went up next day as far as the Hen and Chickens Tavern, and from there on a hired horse, leaving my boxes to be sent for. And the first friend I met was Colonel Homer Virgil Milton, mounted on his mule Hurrah, looking but little older for these years, and attended by Primus on Squash, and talking at our avenue gate with a white man.

“*Morbleu! corbieu! ventre-bleu!*” he cried. “’Tis Anthony himself! My dear boy!” and would have embraced me *à la mode de Bretagne*, I think, had his mule been willing. “How glad I am to see you, and what a joyful surprise up at the house. Primus, do you see Mr. Anthony?”

“I berry glad fer see um, sah, an’ Squash am glad too.”

“That old donkey alive yet?” I cried.

“He boun’ fer lib till yo’ git back, sah,” said Pri-

mus, with a grin. "Now de Lawd let he sarbent 'part in peace."

"You d—d irreverent scoundrel!" said the colonel, with a great show of wrath, "is that the way you use Scripture?"

"Ef de debbil kin use um, massa, why kain't pore nigger?" This was probably too knotty a point in theology for the colonel. He took no notice, but cried:

"Here I am again with my cursed forgetfulness! Anthony, this is Mr. Francis Doubleday. He is a new-comer since you were here last."

I shook hands with the sturdy, middle-aged overseer, whose plain but pleasant face impressed me favorably, as did his conversation when he walked beside my horse up the avenue on parting from the colonel. He stopped at a cottage, built since my departure, not far from the gate. A very blond young woman, handsome, some people thought her, but too thin, came out on the porch, and said, in a somewhat nasal voice: "You are late to-night, Francis," and he said: "My wife, Mr. Ashley." On hearing my name she opened wider her light-lashed eyes, but had nothing to say, apparently. Nor had I, for at this point my Castor and Pollux caught sight of me from the quarters, and between their incoherent joy on seeing me and the clamor of the others, I cannot tell how I found my way to the house. Of the reception there I will not speak. One need not be an absolute prodigal to have, on home-coming, his full share of welcoming embraces and joyous feasting. And I know our Miles would have thought no fatted calf on the place worthy of my consumption, and would have gladly adorned my finger with any rings, saving

the one which Dorothy had given him. My dear father was as keen and alert as ever, with but a slight fall of snow on his locks; Cousin Betty a trifle stouter; Eleanor's sweet face unchanged in her growth; but Miles—how that fellow had developed! Six feet and over, scarcely showing his height by reason of admirable proportions, his handsome head, crowned with waves of fair hair, finely poised upon broad shoulders; large blue eyes beaming with the vigorous health of one who spent his time chiefly in the open air.

We sat, after supper, around the library hearth, my mother's picture looking down upon us as of yore; Nell and Cousin Betty close to me, and Castor and Pollux running in from the kitchen, on all sorts of foolish and flimsy pretexts, for a chance to stare at "Mas' Anthony."

"And how do you find *ille angulus terrarem*," asked my father, with the well-remembered smile, which gave such winning softness to keen irregular features, "after stately Oxford and the *urbes et mores* of older civilizations?"

"It is home," said I, with a look which satisfied him; "*quis inter hæc non obliviscitur malaram*."

"Until the *curas amor* oppress you," returned he, well pleased, "as they do Miles."

"Is Miles oppressed?" I asked. "I should never have guessed it."

"Not while there are horses and hounds and deer to hunt," said Miles, with a laugh.

"And Richard Northcote to talk with," supplemented Cousin Betty, a little sharply, I thought.

"'Tis natural enough that he should enjoy his talk," spoke up little Eleanor. "Excepting papa, and now

Anthony, Richard Northcote is the most travelled and polished gentleman in the country-side."

"Bravo, Nell!" I cried. "Always defend absent friends."

"Richard Northcote is well enough," commented my father indifferently, "but I do not think his long stay in France did him any good. Did you see Mlle. Mars in Paris, Anthony? She will be well past her zenith now, but always fine. And of course you young fellows missed nothing at Covent Garden or the Surrey or Haymarket?"

"There was Charles Kemble, you know," said I suggestively, "and Ellen Tree, and Mathews and Macready, not to speak of Catalina and Ellsler."

"Ah! you should have seen John Philip Kemble, and the glorious Siddons, and the great Cooke, and best of all, the divine Mrs. Jordan! To think of her makes one feel but twenty years again. Such eyes! Such a shape, and voice, and laugh! 'twas grace and joy incarnate! Ah, villain!"—seeing the trap into which he had fallen—"well, then, yes. The university men ran off to go to the play in my time, too. But there were giants on the tragic stage in those days, and for the very Muse of Comedy herself, you must have seen Jordan as *Polly Peachum* in the 'Beggar's Opera.' "

In such simple talk and enjoyment our evening fled, and we were loath to separate when the time came for us to take our bedroom candlesticks from the hall-table and make our way up the winding stairs—not, however, until I had raised the lid of Cousin Betty's old harpsichord, with its two banks of yellow keys, and begged her to sing for me once more her favorite,

Wamba's "Anne-Marie, Love, Day is Begun." She protested that her singing days were over, which, perhaps, they were; but none the less was she pleased when I said I could wait to hear Nell's proficiency on the grand piano and Clementi harp I had brought over with me, but that nobody could sing "Anne-Marie, Love," like herself. And the kind soul came up afterward all out of breath to give me an extra kiss in return for my compliments.

'Twas as though I had never been away when I found myself in my old room with its blazing fire and dimity curtains, and nothing changed; the carven evangelists among the Cupids on the mahogany head-board, ready, as of old, to watch over slumbers not quite so innocent and light-hearted as then, I fear. Miles now occupied an adjoining room, but he came in in his shirt-sleeves as soon as Castor and Pollux had left us; and, I thought again, he was a goodly sight to see.

"'Tis a great thing to have you back again, dear old boy," he said with an affectionate hand on my shoulder, "though I'm afraid 'twill be dull for you after London and Paris. But there are some amusements, you know, and Richard Northcote—you remember how clever Dick always was—and now, with his talk of life abroad, you will find him amazing good company."

"Northcote is clever enough, Miles," said I, "but I must tell you there were some queer stories afloat about him in Paris; and I wouldn't be too intimate or play cards with him."

"Oh," cried Miles, flushing uneasily, "if his character is good enough for him to be received, there is no more to be said. And an old neighbor, too! He

goes everywhere. He offended the colonel last week, though," breaking into a great laugh at the remembrance.

"How was that?"

"It appears that some of Dick's jokes—funny ones, too, though I told him 'twas not becoming to make them about an old man—came to his ears, and then he overheard some foolish talk of Dick's, caught from the young bucks in New York, about 'Washington on a white horse and the British streaking it'—and the colonel won't stand any jokes about Washington, you know, and thought 'twas his duty to challenge him. And he dressed himself in those same old regimentals and hunted up Northcote on the race-course, but it fell through. 'I went on purpose to insult him, sir,' he told my father, 'but he was so d—d polite I couldn't.' Northcote knew, you see, how ridiculous 'twould make him to fight a man as old as his grandfather."

"Then if he wouldn't 'fight like a Christian and a gentleman,' " said I, recalling the Englishman's famous complaint about Marion, "he might, at least, refrain from impertinence. But do you know, Miles, who 'twas came to meet me, with her father, down in Charleston?" and his handsome face flushed once more, this time with delight. And forgetting all else, he broke out into incoherence: "Was it Dorothy? And is she not the most beautiful, and the sweetest, and the loveliest, and the kindest?" and similar adjectives, with which he kept me awake until near morning, to which I listened, not all-attentive, my eyes noting the various familiar objects about the wide room; the polished wood and brass shining in the light of blazing

logs; the same quaint old engraving between the windows of the Holy Family flying into Egypt in a gondola drawn by swans; the identical book, "Affection's Gift," on the table, presented to me by Nell on my tenth birthday, with an inscription in her childish scrawl—

"Take it, 'tis a gift of love,
That seeks thy good aloan,
Keep it for the giver's sake,
And rede it, for thine own"—

and further decorated, as 'twas Miles' custom and mine to do at that period, by a rude effigy of a gallows and a solemn warning to our "honest friends" not to steal this book. A warning, by the way, more needed in these days, when wholesale literary pirates are an influential and prosperous class in most communities.

CHAPTER VII.

"You will wish to go to work at once, Anthony," said my father, briefly and to the point next morning. "Buzzard's Roost"—my mother's place—"became yours last year. Most of it, as you know, is now a turpentine farm, and your own negroes have been trained there. Francis Doubleday is very efficient, and can tell you all you may need to know at first of either cotton or turpentine. He leaves but little for Miles to do on this place; and the boy's medical course is scarcely of use, the hands fortunately keeping healthy. I am afraid that ingenuous puer has too much leisure for his own good, especially since your Cousin Betty has taken to ordering Glauber's salts by the barrel and Flugger's pills by the cart-load. But he is a brave, honest lad, and good to look at, is he not, Anthony?" brightening with fatherly pride, as Miles, riding past outside, touched his hat and smiled. "As for you, my boy, I thought your home-coming would have been my signal to retire to my books here and rely on your congenial companionship for my chief pleasure——"

"At your age, sir!" I cried. "Why, you are but a young man yet!"

"*Est tempus abire,*" he said, with something of weariness. "I have a fancy that I shall not live to be very old, and 'tis but a brief tedious scene at most and best. However, my term in Washington is not yet

expired, and 'tis scarcely a fit time to withdraw, with all this nullification excitement on hand. You will meet Mr. Calhoun, by the way, at the Overstreets' next week. You know that I am not entirely in accord with him on this question; but you shall study the matter for yourself. I am mistaken in you," looking at me keenly, "if you do not place brains or sword-arm, or both, at your country's service, sooner or later. In the mean time, 'tis well to become acquainted with one's own region and people."

Eleanor was waiting to waylay me by the great clock in the hall, and ran up in a pretty flutter of excitement.

"O Anthony, did you know that Harriet Overstreet was to be married next week to Henry Cope-land, and you and Miles and Richard Northcote and Charlotte Overstreet and Dorothy and I are to be bridesmaids and groomsmen; and I have a new silver muslin gown, and have worked a satin cravat for you, and Mr. Calhoun will be there!"

"You shall tell me all about it when I come in," said I, with my arm around her as she paused, out of breath—"if Miles is a bridesmaid and Charlotte a groomsmen, and whether 'tis you or I will wear the muslin gown."

"How do you like Francis and Mrs. Doubleday?" asked Cousin Betty, after I had fallen for some time into the daily routine of riding over Todd's Creek and busying myself at Buzzard's Roost.

"The husband very much, indeed," I replied. "The wife I have only seen a few times. She seems to have a great quantity of blond hair, but with it a trick of keeping her eyes lowered, not always pleasant."

"She is rather pretty. You think so, Miles?"

"I don't know," said he indifferently. "I've scarcely noticed. Too thin, I think."

"Dorothy is coming to-morrow," sly Nell put in.

"I am sorry for Mrs. Doubleday," went on Cousin Betty. "Doubleday is the best of husbands, but vastly too old for her and too absorbed in his work. She was a factory girl when he married her and accustomed to a crowd of her associates about her, and must be lonely at the cottage. But she takes long walks and that helps pass her time."

"Does she not dress a little showily for her place and means?" I hinted; "surely cotton gowns suit better than silk for country wear."

"Those are things of mine or Mrs. Northcote's, perhaps," said good Cousin Betty, indulgent. "She is young, you know, and not always acquainted with what is suitable. I do what I can for her in the way of help and advice; and Mrs. Northcote—who is always ailing now, Anthony, a sad invalid since her husband's death—has her with her very often, and is most kind."

Pollux, who came in next day with news of a fox in Mosquito Bottom, was deeply disappointed at "Mas' Miles'" lack of interest. I tried to make up to him by doubling my own. But my brother's restless idleness after dinner affected me to that extent that at last I called out: "For Heaven's sake, Miles, stop stalking about the piazza like an impatient lion! Why not take your horse and go as far as the tavern to meet the Winters?"

"Yes, I was thinking of that," simply, "but 'tis two hours too soon. Thank you, Anthony, I will go at once."

I met him at dusk when I was riding in myself from the lower plantation, turning into the avenue, with something of a cloud on his frank features. "My horse has cast a shoe——" he commenced, and then broke off: "I do think Dick Northcote might have let me have his place with them in the coach and offered to ride my horse. But he is so spoiled, with his confounded French effeminacy."

"Perhaps he didn't have on his riding-boots," said I, remembering our childish passage-at-arms.

"I suppose he fancied himself tired from a short day's journey," said literal Miles. "Dorothy, poor girl, could not help showing her fatigue, so I only stopped a few moments at the house."

But he was his own sunny self again when a little perfumed, silver-edged note, the seal an arrow, was brought him in the morning; and he rode off at once and we saw him no more that day. Nell's piano and harp had now been placed in position in the long parlor. Cæsar had just lighted all the candles in the evening, when we all went in to see them; and I had just picked up the snuffer-tray, to snuff a long-wicked one, before I placed it on the piano-bracket, when the hall door opened and I heard, among other voices, a silvery peal of laughter which was unmistakable. I finished snuffing that candle and another which needed it while Cæsar threw open the parlor doors; then turned to see Dorothy's lissome figure advancing down the room, in riding-hat and plumes, holding her long habit skirt thrown daintily over her arm.

"Since nobody—worth speaking of"—with a Parthian glance over her shoulder—"has been to see me to-day," she cried, "I have been forced to come over

myself and beg for a cup of tea, Miss Betty. Mr. Ashley—Colonel Milton, how glad I am to see you all! and dear Eleanor,” whom she embraced. The elder men looked at her with visible admiration; my father kissing, with old-fashioned grace, the hand from which she had drawn her gauntlet; the colonel, with a magnificent bow, calling out, “*Foi de Chevalier! c’est Diane elle-même.*”

“You see, Mr. Anthony Ashley,” she said, looking at me archly, “’tis not only fine young beaux from foreign parts who compare poor me to the Olympian goddesses.” One of the men following her—Miles was the other—bestowed on me a keen glance upon this before coming forward to shake hands. ’Twas Richard Northcote, though I had not recognized him at first. Of medium height, he was much thinner than as a boy, and darker; wearing a mustache, not common at that time among civilians, to partly hide, perhaps, a scar obtained in some duel which, crossing his mouth, might, unconcealed, have given an unpleasant expression. The frequent smile was somewhat marred by an habitual slight frown between his heavy brows; but his manner was most polished, even toward the colonel, and that of a man of the world.

“Will you come to my room, Dorothy,” said Nell shyly, “to arrange your dress?”

“Yes, dear, and for a little of your renovating milk of roses,” in a stage-whisper, with a laughing backward look as she went off, her protecting arm about Nell’s slighter figure.

“I am sure,” cried Cousin Betty indignantly, “no two girls in the country have less need of renovation—if that means rouge—and Dorothy with her bloom!”

"Excellently well done," said Northcote, "and God did all." Miles looked slightly uneasy at the subject of conversation, and I changed it.

"And have all you gentlemen," asked Dorothy at the supper-table, "fine new suits to grace Harriet Overstreet's wedding? She means it to be a grand affair, she tells me."

"You know my best suit, Dorothy," said Miles, with simplicity. "I bought it of Jehu Jones, London tailor, on the corner of Church Street and Longitude Lane, three years ago. 'Tis as good to-day."

"Oh! *you*, Miles! the worse you are dressed the handsomer you look!" with a dubious and impatient graciousness, of which he saw only the better part. "But I know Mr. Northcote's affection for 'articles de Paris,' and a stranger like Anthony has, doubtless, the newest and finest modes in ruffles."

"Anthony's new ruffles are vastly genteel and tasteful," said Cousin Betty over the silver urn, with an emphatic nod, which set her mob-cap in a flutter.

"*Mille tonnerres!* madam," cried the colonel; "even in the matter of clothes, I think old friends the best. I would not change my old Continental uniform for any of these young bucks' coats pinched in at the waist, and ruffles so stiff and stocks so high that they must carry their noses up in the air, like a dog pointing at partridges! And then their legs——"

"You must admit," said my father pacifically, "that wearing their own hair becomingly curled and brushed is an improvement on the hair powder of my time and the wigs of yours."

The colonel and Cousin Betty would both have protested, but Northcote remarking: "'Tis a question *de*

gustibus," asked: "Are you first bridesmaid, Miss Winter?"

"Yes, I am," she replied, "but had much of an inclination to be none at all when I found I was to stand next that pert Charlotte Overstreet. I am at odds with her. Will you believe, Mr. Ashley," loftily, "that when I told her, quite gently, that the first English settlers here, and the Overstreets among them, were, it is a matter of history, a godless lot, she quite lost her temper, and said they were better, socially at least, than the Huguenot refugees; and pretends to know that my great-grandfather, Pierre Pitou, was but a carpenter, turned fiddler, who taught dancing to the Indians!"

"And what did you say?" asked my father, amused.

"I told her 'twas not so. And if it were, 'twas all the finer to take any means to earn his bread and escape persecution!"

"His daughter married the son of one of those cavalier roysterers, Dorothy," said my father quietly; "and as for the persecuting spirit, they all brought it over to this free country with other importations. 'Twas a feature of the age. The English settlers here were mostly landless resolute, sharked up, here and there, for the plantations, with a few exceptions, who were of noble race"—glancing at the Landgrave's picture—"and having little religion themselves, they resented it in others and made the thrifty middle-class French refugees feel their resentment in various tormenting restrictions and civil disabilities. That same great-grandfather of yours, Dorothy, was turned out of the Unsteady Assembly as a dissenter, when his gracious majesty was signing himself 'Head of the Church

and Defender of the Faith ' in prayer-books compiled expressly for the Carolina colony. And so late as my own youth, colonel, one of the pioneers of Methodism in Charleston was held under a pump in bitter cold weather by a furious mob; from which, being a consumptive, he died. I well remember what a fine amusement 'twas thought for a party of well-dressed young idlers to smash the windows in their little meeting-house. 'Tis my memories of that time, perhaps," smiling, "which make me so averse to church-going."

"'Twas not a religion known in my youth," gravely replied the colonel, in whose military career religion of any kind had been, by his own showing, a rare luxury. "Nor do I think it a becoming one for an officer and a gentleman, but, *nom de Dieu!* 'twas cursed inhuman to abuse an invalid."

"The Winters are as well descended, I hope, as the Overstreets," cried Dorothy, ignoring these trifling polemical points, as she arose putting aside a golden-brown curl presumptuously straying across her fair brow.

"Both families are well enough," muttered my father a little impatiently. Finding me next him, "But for Heaven's sake, Anthony, order cards and candles in the library. Here come Mr. and Mrs. Winter, and we will not get him started on genealogy. 'Tis his hobby, and nothing is so tiresome as to be forced to climb another man's family tree. There are only a few families in this country whose ancestors are worth speaking of," with another look at the Landgrave's portrait. 'Twas a very fine one, painted by Sir Peter Lely, which had crossed the seas, and bore our coat of arms painted in the left-hand corner. My

father—the wisest of men have their failings—ordered the same on such family portraits as had been painted in his time. I have long since discontinued its use, thinking such matters unsuited to republican simplicity.

The whist-players were soon busy in the library, Cousin Betty fluttering in and out between the rooms, whose open doors permitted a view from one to the others.

“Anthony,” said Dorothy in her clear, liquid tones, standing under the glistening chandelier in the parlor, “you are still a stranger to the wonderful proficiency gained by Nell and me under the accomplished Mrs. Hamilton, who was a mistress of deportment and all the graces. We must give you proof. A courtesy should come first. I was, I assure you, Monsieur Fayolle’s best pupil. Now, Eleanor, right foot out, one, two, three—do not stand there laughing——” and she picked up the narrow prune silk skirt she had worn under her habit, and with the prettiest foot in the world extended swept me a charming courtesy and gravely said: “Mr. Anthony Ashley, you are welcome to your native country after long absence!” Then with an inimitable change of tone: “Would you like to hear me play the flageolet?” Miles laughed, delighted that she should amuse me. Northcote, to my surprise, seemed to wear a frown.

“You have not brought your flageolet!” exclaimed Cousin Betty, coming in for a moment; “’tis most ungenteel and unsuitable for a young lady. There are the new harp and piano.”

“I like my flageolet best and choose to play it,” she said, in what struck me as an unbecoming tone to an

elder woman. Perhaps she noticed my gravity, but only so far as to go up to Cousin Betty and with coaxing arts to make her smile before she left the room. Then she took out from the long satin reticule she wore on her arm an ivory inlaid flageolet, which she screwed together and tried, with much delightful by-play.

"Now, Nell," motioning her to the open piano, "take care of the candles! Now try 'Flow On, Thou Shining River,'" and Nell accompanying her, she played, one foot on a cushion, her rosy lips to the flageolet, that pretty melody. 'Twas all charming enough in the candle-light.

"You look," said uncompromising Miles, "like the musical angels in the old pictures."

"But whate'er you do still betters doing," amended Northcote, the sneering under-tone in his frequent compliments to women audible to me. I have often wondered if they did not hear it and know it to indicate indifference to all but physical charms in them. Dorothy's look toward him I could not see, her head being turned away, but his gaze was curiously intent though swift.

"And how do you like my flageolet, Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance?"

"I like the piano better," said I briefly. It did not seem fitting that Miles' betrothed should give coquetish glances to a man of Richard Northcote's reputation. Still, she was but a girl; and those stories were, perhaps, exaggerated, and he was Miles' friend.

"Do you not sing, Dorothy?" I asked more gently.

"Sometimes; not alone to-night; but I will try a duo with Nell," and Eleanor's soprano and her pure

contralto were joined in "I Know a Bank Whereon the Wild 'Thyme" and "Araby's Daughter."

"Give us 'He That Loves a Rosy Cheek!'" called my father from the card-table, and in this round and another, "Come, Lads and Lassies," my baritone and Miles' occasional deep bass tones were available. Then Cousin Betty, being a fiery Jacobite, as were all readers of Scott, called for "Wha'll be King but Charlie" and "Bonnets of Blue."

Richard Northcote, who had taken no part in this singing, though invited, sat down to the piano when Nell arose, and then he gave me, at least, a genuine surprise. Playing his own accompaniment by ear, his tenor voice arose, sweet, strong, rich, perfect. I involuntarily drew near, and while he sang all suspicion or prejudice vanished. It seemed impossible that a man who sang like that could think or act unworthily. He sang "The Death That Lies in Julia's Eyes," a French chansonnette, and after striking a chord or two hesitantly and after another swift glance at Dorothy, he ended with "Shall I, Wasting in Despair." After this, knowing the ways of the house, he went himself into the dining-room for a glass of water, and was gone several moments.

"Did you know that Tom Broadacre was coming from Edisto to be a groomsman, Nell?" asked Dorothy.

"He will stand with you, perhaps."

"I hope he will not trip me up, then," said Nell, laughing, "as he invariably does when we dance together."

I saw no sign in my little sister's fresh, smiling face that her old-time admirer had made any progress with her, but then she was, perhaps, watching Dick North-

cote's return to the room. The chaise and saddle-horses were already in front, the card-party having finished their game, and Dorothy went up for her hat and habit. She must have come down very quickly, for entering the dining-room, in my turn, for water, I found her there, just by the mantel.

"This portrait," she said hurriedly, without looking at me, "might easily be taken for you in court-dress and sword, Anthony. When you were away"—with a constrained smile—"I used to say good-night to the Landgrave for you, sometimes."

"It was very friendly in you, Dorothy, but not half so pleasant for me as to stand here and answer for myself." I was leaning with my elbow on the low wooden mantel and looking down into the lovely face shaded by the dark plumes. Was it my fancy that the round cheek had lost something of its brilliant coloring within the last few moments? My hand was touching the varnished frame of the picture, and by an idle chance I let it fall behind it. Stuck in a fastening of the canvas, close to the edge, was a paper which I drew out, surprised.

"Why, it is a note," I said, "and addressed to you! Even Miles, I find, likes a little romantic mystery."

"He has more romance than you think," she answered, quickly slipping the note within her reticule.

But that was not Miles' handwriting. Not even the *curas amor* my father talked of could alter it so much. And 'twas like an echo of my own misgivings when I heard the colonel's loud voice quote to my father, over his good-night pipe in the library: "'Sir Oliver, this is a d—d wicked world and the fewer we trust the better!'" "

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR several days before the wedding we saw but little of either Eleanor or Dorothy, they in their capacity of bridesmaids spending most of their time at the house of the bride-elect. 'Twas not, in those days, easy or customary to transport a caterer and his men from a neighboring city, so that the lighter, more ornamental preparations for the feast fell to the share of the bridesmaids, and were looked upon as a labor of love. Our Nell's skill in the confection of cakes, jellies, custards, and cordials for such occasions had called forth many a compliment, which made Cousin Betty, her teacher, bridle with pride. As for Dorothy, I had heard that she stood by, for the most part, and cheered the others on, which was also useful in its way.

I was a little late, coming in from the turpentine farm, the afternoon of the festal day, having sent for Doubleday to have his advice about some matters, and we were slowly returning when, fording Todd's Creek, we met the Copelands' double chaise, with the groom, his brother, and Tom Broadacre, who had just arrived.

"You will be late!" they cried.

"You are too early!" I retorted, "but that is easily understood," smiling at the groom.

"If Miles and you are too busy to go over at once, I can easily light and escort Miss Sherwood and Miss Nell," said Tom ingenuously.

This disinterested offer declined with thanks, we parted, the overseer and I leaping our farthest fence and striking across fields as a short cut. We met Cæsar and a few of our other negoes going to the Overstreets' place, in the same way, and carrying fiddles and bones.

"We's de band, Mas' Anthony, fer de weddin'," they shouted, in jovial chorus.

"I could find it in me, sometimes," said Doubleday, with a half-sigh of fatigue, "to envy those fellows. They are so entirely free from responsibility. 'Tis not only sufficient for the day is the evil and the good, with them, but sufficient for the moment. Hear them laugh!"

"Perhaps you take life too seriously," I suggested, glancing aside at his rugged face, unduly care-worn for his years. "I hope you have not too much to do."

"Not at all. The plantations are large, but I found them in good order. The chief trouble is to get a proper amount of work out of the hands. Your father tells me to be moderately strict, but means me to be indulgent, I think."

"The house-servants are spoiled, I know," said I, with a smile, thinking how little Castor had to do.

"They certainly are," agreed the overseer, "but that is not my business. I couldn't help laughing when I went up to the house to speak to your father this morning, and found half a dozen pickaninnies asleep on the bench in the lower hall. 'What are you all doing here?' I asked. 'We's waitin' fer see ef Mis' Betty doan' want us,' they answered, all together. Still, they're a contented, good-natured lot as ever I've had charge of, and that's a good deal. I hear 'tis not so at Oaklands"—lowering his voice—"since young

Mr. Northcote has been master. Hard work, prompt punishment, and few holidays. The mulatto he has put in charge—capable enough, too—is a cruel rascal, and glad to pay off scores on his fellow-slaves. Mr. Northcote himself is away much of his time. His mother's sickness makes the place dull, and all he cares for is that so much money shall be raised from the crops, being in debt to his factors. There was not a dollar of debt on the place when he took it; but then, in his father's day, there was no gambling at the tavern in winter, or Saratoga Springs in summer, or other imported ways from Paris."

"You need not believe all the gossip you hear, Mr. Doubleday," said I, somewhat gravely, not being altogether pleased at this sort of communication about an acquaintance from a subordinate.

"No, now, Mr. Anthony," he replied, with sturdy persistence, "'tis not gossip. And where Mr. Miles and yourself," with an awkward attempt at *finesse*, "are so intimate, you should know what is said." With which he dismounted at his porch, where Mrs. Doubleday seldom was to meet him now, possibly because his hours were uncertain.

The colonel, in his well-remembered regimentals—a world too wide for him now—was with my father, who looked well in full dress, having just an old-fashioned touch about it. Jupiter was with them in the library, trying to convince my father that the grays were the proper horses to take us over to the Overstreets' and not the bays, which the latter mildly but firmly requested. At last the old coachman's real reason came out.

"An' how I gwine fiddle fit fer a weddin' wid dem frisky bays a-pullin' my wrists offen me fer tree mile?"

"You're late, my boy," called my father, when Jupiter had retired grumbling. "The others are nearly ready, and you must hurry. The colonel and I—*odorati canos capillos rosa*—will while away our time of waiting with a pinch of Maccabaw," holding out his enamelled box to the colonel's ready fingers.

I hurried to my room, where Castor had all prepared for me, and with his aid was soon ready.

"Mas' Anthony," he said persuasively, as I was descending, "all de niggers dat kin fiddle done gone to Mas' Overstreet's 'ceppin' Pollux an' me; an' 'tis too late fer walk. Kin we hab two o' de mules?"

"Oh, I suppose so," hastily, and ran down to find the rest of the party assembled. Miles handsome as always, even in the suit from "Jehu Jones, London tailor at the corner of Church Street and Longitude Lane." Cousin Betty in rustling brocade, and Eleanor, sylph-like, in what she told me was a "silver Indian gauze, spangled," with sarsnet ribbons, and little white slippers, "spangled" too, whatever that may be. It sounds rather queer, though it looked nice enough.

"And oh, dear Anthony!" she cried, running up to me, "the lace tucker and coral beads and Limerick gloves all go with my dress so beautifully!"

"Yes, Anthony," said Cousin Betty, fingering her cameos, "I must allow that you have a vastly genteel and pretty taste in dress."

"We could better judge of that, Betty," said my father, "if you would let me see the 'curled Anthony,'" putting on his glasses to look at me, which I bore as well as I could. "Very well, indeed, Anthony; though John Wharton Ashley's period had advantages in dress over ours."

"The trousers are tighter than we've worn 'em here," said Miles critically, "and ruffles wider, and white satin stock higher. But those ruby studs are pretty, old fellow."

"In short," cried Eleanor playfully, "our travelled youth is an exquisite of the first water and a beau indeed!"

"Jehu Jones does very well, too," said Miles contentedly. "I wonder why Dorothy need have given me this book last night," taking a little pamphlet from an inner pocket.

"Let me see," said I. "'The Art of Tying the Cravat in Sixteen Lessons. Thirty-two Styles. By Le Blanc. Motto, 'Nothing is more laudable than an inquiry after truth.' Addison!'"

"I wonder, too, why she should have given it to you!" cried Cousin Betty resentfully. "She thinks too much of such matters."

"My dear Betty!" from my father indulgently, "'tis only natural at her age. They are in the spring-time of life, when *nunc decet impedire nitidum caput aut viridi myrto aut flore*, which only means that 'tis better to be an exquisite than a sloven when one is young, or old either, provided that it does not interfere with work."

"Or fighting," added the colonel, coming in from the piazza, where he had been airing his regimentals after a pipe.

The distant sound of fiddle-tuning and joyous buzz of festivity met us at the Overstreets'. And from hospitable lights streaming from piazzas and windows into the night, and excited running in and out of ladies' maids and other servants, we knew that we were

none too soon. In fact, my brother, Nell, and I were needed at once by our respective partners, and found ourselves presently standing in procession before the closed folding-doors. These being thrown open by the butler, we moved forward, after the white figure of the bride and the less gracefully happy one of the groom, until we faced the minister standing with his back to a long mirror, which reflected glittering chandeliers with innumerable wax candles and the pretty evergreen decorations, as well as the bridal party.

The few words uttered which make such a difference in two lives, and Jupiter and the other fiddlers, in an improvised gallery at the end of the long parlors, struck up gayly "A Health to the Bride," while congratulations were being offered. Then waiters with various refreshments made their appearance, and the tune changed to "Haste to the Wedding," and dancing began.

'Twas Dorothy's place as first bridesmaid to dance with the groom, and Miles' privilege to lead out the bride. My partner was the obnoxious Charlotte Overstreet of Dorothy's story, a plain but sensible girl, who, moreover, danced well, as the first contra-dance proved.

I was still talking to her when the cotillon began, so claimed that, too, and found myself opposite Miles and Dorothy Winter. The latter I had caught a dazzling glimpse of when I entered, but not since; and now could scarce withdraw my eyes, like many others that I noticed. There was a buzz of admiration about her, of which she appeared unconscious. If she was beautiful in every-day attire, she was divinely radiant with her white neck and arms showing from

the filmy short-waisted gown, whose clinging narrow folds displayed her perfect form and grace; her shining hair drawn high on her small head into a wavy knot, fastened with a gold comb, from which escaped two or three silky tendrils. 'Twas Aphrodite *en grande toilette*, as she had jestingly written. "A beautiful creature," said an old gentleman on his way to the card-room. "A handsome couple," amended his companion. "They are like the fairy prince and princess in a story." She stepped gliding through the dance as light as air, and touched my hand a score of times, but spoke no word beyond her first salute. Nor did I, devoting myself to my partner.

I asked the latter, during an interval, who was the gentleman in the next room, centre of an interested group, whose strong features, with hair thick and brushed back, impressed me even at that distance.

"You do not know Mr. Calhoun!" she exclaimed. "Ah, I forgot, you have been away some time. Your father is with him, I see. He is the most delightful company. You must be introduced." Which she kindly undertook herself when that dance ended. The smile that he gave me, after the first long look from wonderful eyes under those shaggy eyebrows, was intoxicating flattery to a young man.

"The son of your father must be a most welcome acquaintance," said he, still holding my hand. "I can admire a brave volunteer, even when I differ from him in views. And I can wish his son nothing better than to resemble him in field or forum, to either or both of which, I predict, you will find your way also sooner or later, though now *si te digna manet divini gloria ruris*. You will find, as time goes on, that

your life escapes, in a measure, from your own control, and seems to work independently, or even in defiance, of you. The Sabine farm and the sage's life are the happiest lot, doubtless; and *felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*, but I hope you will remember that the great heart of our country, to beat strongly and firmly, needs a constant infusion of young blood." We passed to topics of general interest, in which he held me, with others, fascinated, being a most eloquent talker.

When next I saw Dorothy a lively reel had just struck up, and the crowd of gallants about her was dispersing in search of other partners, after vainly inviting her. I caught a glance from her star-like eyes as I approached.

"I don't care for the reel," she said to Miles, standing beside her chair holding her gold-embroidered reticule, in the happy content her proximity induced on him. "'Tis too fatiguing."

"'Twas my dance," Northcote put in quietly.

"Well, Mr. Anthony Ashley," she said, not noticing, "I am pleased to see you at last. Aphrodite's girdle is not so powerful as you pretend, or its charms would have drawn you away from even a great statesman."

Miles, who had caught but one word of this, said:

"Dorothy will not tell me who is the fairy godfather that she vows gave her the new belt-clasp and ornament," alluding to a vinaigrette that she wore hanging at her girdle, in dull gold, with her initials in sapphires set low.

I was vexed that she should make a mystery to Miles of such a small matter, and said immediately: "Why, tis but a trifle that I brought her from Paris."

His kind face cleared at once, and he laid his hand on my shoulder. "My dear good fellow, 'twas like your thoughtfulness. Of course, of course! When you were shopping for Nell, of course," and he went off to help form a set.

Northcote again offered his arm. "Thank you," she said, "I believe I will get Anthony to take me for a stroll on the piazza. 'Tis warm in-doors."

"And my dance?" he persisted, the frown overpowering the smile.

"I have said I did not care for the reel," she replied indifferently.

He turned as if to address me, when she interposed hastily, and a few hurried words were interchanged so low that I heard only the last, "'Tis a promise, then," and "the Boulanger" and "home afterward." He retired with a low bow and I led her out on the piazza. 'Twas a clear frosty night, with a nipping and an eager air, for which her dress was unsuitable, as a woman's dress mostly is.

"You cannot stay out here, after dancing, too, without a warm wrap," I said.

"Miles never says 'cannot' to me," was all she deigned in reply, looking up at the stars.

"Anthony does," I replied, and calling one of the maids sent her for a wrap, and when 'twas brought folded it around her unresisting figure.

"Now that my life is safe," she said coolly, "we may take a turn, perhaps," and laying her slim hand on my arm, commenced pacing up and down the least-frequented end of the great piazza, dotted elsewhere by numerous other couples. We could hear the gay music of the reel in bursts through the closed windows,

and the rhythmic tread of the dancers' feet, led by Miles himself; and passing sometimes the stream of light from each casement, I could just see a pair of lustrous eyes laughing up at mine.

"'Tis cruel of me," began her silvery tones, "to keep you from your charmer. Charlotte Overstreet has made a rare conquest and a speedy one. 'Tis a novelty, too, for her."

"Miss Overstreet is a young lady of superior intelligence and good sense," I pronounced, somewhat formally.

"Which I will wager my lovely clasp and vinaigrette you told her," she laughed low and a little maliciously. "Compliments on her superior understanding are the consolation stakes men usually offer a plain woman."

I was silent, for indeed I did remember some awkward attempts of mine to convey to Miss Overstreet my appreciation of her conversation.

"Ah, poor Charlotte!" she laughed. 'Twas clear she had not yet forgiven Miss Overstreet's allusion to the fiddling and dancing Pitou ancestor. "Look at Eleanor," she said suddenly, pausing at a window. "How prettily she moves along, and with Tom Broadacre, who always treads on her feet! She dances with him because he cannot dance. She always takes partners no one else will have and talks to the bashful ones and the elderly. I will not walk or talk with any one that does not please me: but I can admire her goodness, as the Athenians did the Spartans, you know; or, *was* it the Athenians? You see," moving on again, "I have been studying since you left, and have not spent all my time on samplers. Your Cousin Betty has

just finished a beautiful piece of tapestry-work in Berlin wool—Ruth and Boaz in a corn-field; or perhaps 'tis Jonah and the whale. I hate cross-stitch more than she does the flageolet. And I admire Byron more than I do L. E. L., which, she tells me, is unlady-like. Is it so very bad, Anthony?"

"Byron," said I judiciously, "though somewhat lame, has not cloven feet or horns. Your turpitude about the tapestry-work abominations I can forgive. They are worse, I think myself, than the flageolet, though that, too—well, to return to poetry, I think that, with some prudent adviser to select for you, you might enjoy parts of Byron."

"Are you a prudent adviser? You do not look it, though you talk a little like Mrs. Hamilton. She used to give us books to read out of which she had cut pages and pages. I knew a wicked girl—not I, 'twas too much trouble—who would buy another copy of such a work, cut out what Mrs. Hamilton had left, and keep the rest. Ah! the reel is ended, and there go Miles and Richard Northcote to the card-room, perhaps. I am told he plays well."

"Who—Miles?"

"No, not Miles."

"Miles may content himself," said I calmly, "with being the best dancer, rider, and shot in the country."

"Except one or two. If he could sing like Richard Northcote or talk like you," she murmured mockingly, "he would be an Admirable Crichton."

I would have answered, but the great hall door opening, let out a chorus of merry voices.

"Ah! here will be some tiresome people looking for me," she said, drawing me into a shady corner.

"Let us keep quite still; I don't want to dance," languidly. Her white hand clung to my arm, and she leaned with a slight pressure as of fatigue. Her light dress speedily caused discovery, however, and we were surrounded by various gallants, with reproaches for her absence from the dance and charges that I had spirited their queen away and must now relinquish her. 'Twas nearly midnight, and the fiddlers playing a march reminded me to seek for supper the bridesmaid allotted me; but I turned a moment to pick up a plummy fan which Dorothy had dropped unknowing as she went. 'Twas a costly, fragile toy, but what attracted my notice in it were some lines faintly written within the mother-of-pearl and gold handle. I held it to the nearest light and read:

FROM R.

"By Dolly's lovely fingers pressed,
What power this fan may claim !
For the same breeze that cools her breast
In others lights a flame."

'Twas so much the custom of the day to indite verses to a fair friend about anything or nothing, the writer lisping in doggerel if the numbers would not come, that there was no special significance, perhaps, in this. But I thought if I were Miles I would not care that other men should come so near my sweetheart as to write these lines; nor, again, if I were Miles, would I consent to so long a betrothal. But my dear brother was ever of a frank and trusting spirit, and so entirely loyal and simple-minded himself that he could conceive of no less fine a sense of honor in friend or mistress.

I had no opportunity to return the fan until after

supper, when she was standing with Miles at the head of the last contra-dance. She took it with a slight accession of color, calling out at the same moment "La Belle Cathérine," as a notice to the fiddlers of the tune desired; and then—that was a dance to be remembered. How proudly and gayly the handsome pair at the head bowed and stepped each a *pas seul*, then crossing hands down the middle, and then, when the sweet old air was closing, and the fiddlers' bows rested on a final long note, what a picture they made in that graceful, lingering, stately salute! I saw Northcote, not in the dance, leaning against a window, his brilliant black eyes fixed on Dorothy.

All guests were lodged in the house that night, country fashion; and it must have been dawn before sounds of mirth died away completely in the bedrooms. I seemed, myself, to have just closed my eyes, when the fiddles playing "A Health to the Bride" summoned us to breakfast, where the bridesmaids poured out our coffee. A fox-hunt was arranged for this morning, which the clear, cool weather made delightfully invigorating. 'Twas not a long or hard run, and we were back in time for a very gay dinner at two o'clock. Mr. Calhoun, whose table-talk had drawn my father and others around him, went up to Dorothy and her little court after this repast, and said, bowing:

"Miss Winter, I have perceived that we stand, as to the young men here, somewhat in position of leaders of rival camps. If I dared to suggest such an infliction of myself, we might be doubly strong by uniting our followers."

"Let me place you in command of mine at once, Mr. Calhoun," said Dorothy, rising to sweep him a courtesy.

"Nay, rather," he said, "I am but your lieutenant, an elderly one at that, and too glad to serve under so lovely a captain. Eh, Mr. Ashley, I see you smile! Though we are justices and doctors and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt of our youth in us. Speaking of churchmen, Miss Winter, reminds me of a story they told me down in Charleston about a young belle there. A clergyman said to her that he feared the reason there would be no marriages in Heaven was that there would be no women there. 'No, rather,' she said quickly, 'because there will be no clergyman there to perform the ceremony.'"

"'Twas disrespectful in her," pronounced Dorothy gravely, and we all laughed, for 'twas well known that Miss Winter herself was the belle in question. She wore a great quantity of soft fur this morning, which I had heard Nell call "swan's-down," and warmed her dainty fingers in a muff as big as a pillow. She drew out of it presently a crumpled paper. "'Tis some verse of yours, I think," said she to my father. He took the paper and glanced over it, slightly puzzled.

"'Tis not mine."

"The colonel's, then," she suggested. I bit my lip, for I now remembered the paper.

"*Morbleu!*" said that gallant warrior. "Do you think I go about with a lot of scribbling in my pocket, like a sentimental youngster? No, madam, I talk in plain prose."

"The very plainest, sometimes," murmured Dorothy.

"Let me see the paper," suggested Mr. Calhoun. "I may know it." 'Twas handed him, and with a look which showed me he understood the matter, he

said, "With your permission I will read it to the company." Thus driven into a corner I claimed the foolish lines, which, during the noise and jollity last night, which would not let me sleep, had come to me with some remembered phrase of Virgil's, and which, jotted down, must have been dropped from my pocket by accident somewhere about the place.

"You will still allow me to read it," persisted Mr. Calhoun quietly. His tone made further objection ungracious and I retreated, though with resentment at the untoward fate which had thrown the crude stuff in Dorothy's way to court her mockery. If anything could have made sense of it, 'twould have been Mr. Calhoun's manner of reading:

IN AVERNUS.

Through thickest gloom and ghostly plain athwart
Peered the dark chieftain, under eyebrows swart,
And, for the first, since virtuous he strode
Alive 'mid shades whose wailings sad did bode
Nothing but woe, he felt one real pang.
Whose is that purple robe? Whose sable hair
Sweeps far away from crownèd brow so fair?
Such, well he knows, was Dido in sweet prime.
Comes tardy longing for a vanished time
Ere yet, behind his ships, her vain cries rang.

"Stay, love," he dared to plead, "and speak to me.
How came in thy white breast that wound I see?
Had I but known that thou didst love me so,
Not hell itself, nor all the gods could show
Reason or fate so strong that we should part!"
No look or word vouchsafed, she shuddering sped
To denser shades. From traitorous voice she fled
Wingèd with scorn. The pious hero sued,
Yet saw the queen haste through the silent wood
To rest upon Sichæus' faithful heart.

"Could I have suspected," said I, "that the poor little scrawl was to be read to so brilliant a company, I would have selected some subject better suited to a festive scene."

My father nodded approval. Mr. Calhoun and the rest said something polite. To Dorothy I neither looked nor listened. I was well on my leisurely way to the outer door afterward, when a light step came behind me. On some feminine pretext she had followed, to lay a detaining hand on my arm, while the perfumed swan's-down rose and sank with her quickened breathing, and say: "Anthony, you are not really vexed! I knew your writing, of course, but had the lines been of me, instead of a dead Carthaginian woman, no other eye would ever have seen them, and I would have kept them—always!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE wedding frolic was not over even yet, there being a second ball this evening, and the guests expected to remain over under this hospitable roof until the morrow. But our family party had decided on returning that afternoon, my father having arranged to leave very early next morning for Washington. Miles and I were on horseback behind the coach, when I asked him: "What is the Boulanger, Miles?"

"Why, you *have* become a foreigner!" he answered, "if you have forgotten that 'tis, with us, the last dance of the evening, and gives you the privilege of escorting your partner home afterward." Was this, then, what the whispered agreement meant?

"Who will attend Dorothy?" I asked.

"Her father and mother are with her," said he, opening his eyes a little. "'Tis a disappointment that I cannot stay; but they will remain over night, and if not, she can have a mounted escort of a score or more"—laughing—"if she likes."

"And when is the wedding to be, Miles?"

"My dear fellow," his face brightening, "soon, I hope. It has been put off twice; the last time on your account. She said we ought to wait until we could have your presence. The fact is, she is young and enjoys her freedom; but I hope to get her to name a day very soon now."

I found myself repeating silently:

“For the same breeze that cools her breast
In others lights a flame.”

“And how do you think our little puss of a sister takes Tom Broadacre’s attentions?” broke in his cheery voice. “Not very seriously, I am afraid, but he is a thoroughly good fellow. He has asked me to use my influence, but I would not know how, I am sure. Perhaps you could, Anthony. Father says she must be left to herself; he thinks that feeling must be spontaneous. But what Cousin Betty approves in him is that he is master of his own place and two hundred hands. I do think sometimes, Anthony, that for all their books of poetry and that, women have not so much real sentiment as men.”

“We are the money-makers,” said I oracularly—’twas in my youth—“and can afford ourselves luxuries, even those of feeling.”

My father wrote me from Charleston, where he stayed over Sunday on his way northward. He had had Mr. Calhoun’s company so far, which, he wrote, “made the journey seem short indeed. He went right on, but I had some business in town. I was sorry that he did not stay over and attend service at St. Michael’s—where I was not, by the way—but where he might have formed one of an illustrious trio. Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster, visiting acquaintances here, chanced, both of them, to be shown into the Westervelt pew, where they listened, side by side, to a sermon. ’Twas a good one, I hope; else they may have thought, as orators will, that they could have done much better themselves.” After remarks on plantation matters he concluded: “I have sometimes thought the trite *verbum sapientiæ* totally unnecessary;

as the wise mostly find out for themselves anything of consequence. Still I go on to say that I hear much of high play at the club here, and in the country, too. If my sons were not both men grown, I would state that I have heard certain names connected with reckless doings at Saratoga Springs and the White Sulphur. As it is, I merely send them my blessing and to the dear household fairy, etc."

I thought, after the epistles exchanged between my father and myself at Oxford, and which I could never forget, that his hint concerned me but little; and passed this letter to Miles, who with Nell was with me around the library hearth. He flushed somewhat and broke out impatiently:

"Our club-members here at the tavern play, of course, as most gentlemen do and as you ought to, Anthony. I hope we can afford a little play without ruining our fathers or ourselves. I suppose this is meant for Richard Northcote. 'Tis singular how his cleverness prejudices people against him. The most agreeable companion at fox-hunt or supper-table that I know, a splendid fellow, and ready for anything. I wonder, Anthony, that you cannot appreciate him. He has nothing but praise for you," reproachfully.

"Surely, Miles, to you, at least!" I rejoined, a little sadly. 'Twas evident to me now that my father's word to the wise had come to the foolish, in me. He had not, having great judgment himself, meant that I should use his words exactly in this way.

"I don't understand my father's prejudices," Miles burst forth again.

"Perhaps," said I ironically, "he is jealous, as you suggested, of Mr. Northcote's cleverness."

"Of course not," cried Miles half ashamed, "and Dick admires my father beyond anything, and you know I could not mean that, Anthony. But," with some hesitation, "might he not—you know his views about birth and that—might he not have a feeling about not knowing who Dick's parents were? Mr. Northcote himself told my father the story. His own negro, a butcher in the Charleston market, brought him the child which had been found early in the morning on his stall, with a paper pinned to its dress, stating that the parents were strangers passing through the city on a long journey, and would never return or claim the infant. So the Northcotes, being without a child, took him for their own. Dick never alludes to this; but I have heard him say that a romantic origin was of advantage to a man in France, even though 'tis not so here." Miles having talked himself into good-humor again, here took his whip and went, whistling, to keep a riding engagement.

"Then France is the place for him," said I to turn off the subject lightly with Eleanor. But her soft eyes had widened a little anxiously while we were talking, and her cheek was pale. She put her arm through mine, and playing with my coat-sleeve murmured:

"Papa would admire Mr. Northcote more, and you, too, Anthony, knowing him better. He is so entertaining and accomplished, and his voice is surely delightful!"

"My dear child," I said gently, "I do not intend to be ungenerous to an old playmate; but if he had the voice of a seraph, Miles is intimate enough for the whole family." In my heart, however, noting the

tremor of her voice, I was saying something quite in the colonel's vein. "In the mean time, tell me again where I can get those roots you want."

"There is only one place, and it is two miles off the road, on the edge of the cypress swamp, you know, half a mile from Chinquapin Creek, near old Juba's hut."

"And why not have sent Cato or one of the boys for them at once?"

"Oh, you could not get a negro on the place to go near that swamp. I have sent them, and they come back and tell me they could find no such roots. But Lucinda says they only pretend to go, thinking the place is haunted. I believe a Tory spy was hung near by on a cypress tree, and they say his spirit walks three and screams dismally at night. And then they are afraid of that poor old African, Juba. They say he is an 'obi' man and will "cunjur" them. Cato went there once for a charm, and Juba got angry with him about something, and he has had rheumatism ever since. I suppose he got wet in the swamp, and went to sleep, very likely, in damp clothes; they are so imprudent when you are not watching them. But 'tis of no use arguing with them since then."

I remember Nell's words that night, and made a trial of them with my Castor, ordering him to go down to the swamp next morning for the roots. But he begged off piteously, his face gray with terror and teeth chattering in his head as he asked "ef Mas' Anthony was dat ti-ed of him dat he ax him fer walk right een to de debbil's jaws."

"You black rascal!" called Miles through his door, which as usual was open. "What have you been

doing that you're so afraid of poor old Juba! I'd like to see Pollux if I ordered him there sneak out of going for an old ghost or two!"

But he did, in fact, indulge Pollux much more than I did his twin, and the scamp was a notorious idler, who lied to his master and adored him faithfully and consistently.

I was busy for weeks after this, Francis Doubleday having gone down to Charleston to order supplies and being detained there. And besides my own work, I was glad to help Miles at Woodhurst. Cousin Betty was much concerned about Mrs. Doubleday's loneliness, and trotted over to the cottage frequently in her bustling, kindly way, with some little gift or bit of fine linen or lace to mend, an art which she had herself taught to Mrs. Doubleday. But she seldom found her at home, Mrs. Northcote having one of her bad spells about this time and sending for her nearly every day; for the young woman, though without much education to make her companionable, was, they told me, extremely quick and skilful as a sick-nurse.

My father's letters from Washington were now a source of keen interest, the political crisis being at fever height—wars and rumors of wars in the atmosphere.

"*Mille diables!*" cried the colonel, who always came up to hear the letters read, striking his stick, which he had begun latterly to lean upon, on Cousin Betty's waxed floor. "Have we fought and bled to escape foreign tyranny only to suffer a more galling one from our own brethren, whom we went into that fight largely to help, moreover, we being a favored colony here and suffering but nominal oppression? These tariffs are

worse!" His voice was all for war; and when Cousin Betty suggested that he had lost enough by strife in the past to incline to more peaceful views, he cried: "Nothing left, madam, but the kitchen and Primus and this old carcass, to which my State is now welcome, as my country was before."

Miles, when he was at home of an evening, which between Dorothy and the club at The George was not often, delighted in spurring the veteran into these belligerent moods, in which he would go on abusing God's patience and the king's English, at the same time picking up Nell's thimble or placing a chair for Cousin Betty with suavest gallantry. The latter would counsel moderation and quote Sir Roger's "There is much to be said on both sides," in relation to this nullification excitement. "Which wise saying is, you know, Anthony, from the *Spectator*, a work too little appreciated by the young now. In my girlhood 'twas a great treat when my papa would read one of the papers aloud to us."

'Twas not easy to be moderate in the rush and heat of debate in the southern country when nullification was in question. But in politics I was in accord with my dear father, who tried to be just, dispassionate, and catholic in his opinions more than any man I ever knew. And 'twas a pleasure to be able to send him the Charleston paper in which were printed, occasionally, essays of mine on public matters, as well as other lucubrations in the way of verses.

Whether 'twas his martial spirit revived or the superb, clear, sparkling sunlit days we were now enjoying in our pine-lands, which restored to the colonel some illusion of youth I cannot tell; but something

very startling in his connection happened about this time.

Going over to Buzzard's Roost rather late one morning, followed by Cæsar and Castor, I met him on the road, on Hurrah, his mule, in the old regimentals which flapped gayly, booted and spurred, his cocked hat on; and Primus, in a much-damaged suit of his master's, trotting after on Squash. His dress and air would have told me that this was an occasion of ceremony, even had not his familiar, every-day greeting been replaced by a magnificent wave of the hat and the announcement: "I am, as you may see, sir, on my way to pay a morning call at your father's hospitable mansion."

"Where you will be as welcome, sir," I replied, falling in with his humor, "as you are on every day when you choose to honor us with a visit."

"I thank you, sir," responded Colonel Milton, with much gravity, "and shall accept your polite assurance as an omen of good fortune."

Whereupon he went his way, followed by a guffaw from Castor, half-suppressed by my frown, and a look of profound admiration from Cæsar, whose own manner was very good, being copied, with exaggeration, from my father's, but to whom anything like high-flown magnificence was as the breath of his nostrils.

The colonel had departed when I reached the house at dinner-time; but something of mystery hung in the air, and I saw Eleanor peep at me from behind the hall-clock, and make smiling signs when I was entering the library, where Cousin Betty was seated. The latter was much flushed and wore an unusual air of importance. Indeed, the disrespectful thought crossed

my mind that between her ruffles and her plumpness she looked to-day like a very nice pouter-pigeon. Not until after dinner, when we were alone together, did she say solemnly:

“Anthony, I wish all my family to know in confidence the purpose of Colonel Milton’s visit of ceremony here this morning. He had already written to your father to ask his permission to pay his addresses to me, which was exceedingly correct and shows his acquaintance with genteel customs. And he tells me that my Cousin Anthony replied that ’twas a matter to be decided entirely by myself. Of course, at my age, I have no intention of changing my condition in life, and told Colonel Milton that while I was vastly flattered by the compliment he paid me, I begged that the matter should not be mentioned again”—and here, dropping abruptly her stateliness and the colonel, the good soul put her head on my shoulder, murmuring, with a tear or two—“as if I would leave you all!” Eleanor, to whom this little passage between her elders was as unexpected as a thunderbolt from a clear sky, or some one paying his addresses to St. Michael’s steeple, had, it appeared, made a little fun of the colonel’s solemnity, and more when she learned the object of his visit; but was abruptly checked by Cousin Betty’s getting vexed, for the first time in her experience, calling her “a graceless and giddy girl” and sending her out of the room. They were soon friends again, however, and the only result of this episode was Cousin Betty’s looking a little sentimental for a few days and reading “Sir Charles Grandison,” in eleven volumes, all through once more.

The colonel, without any awkwardness, settled down

again to his evening game of whist at Woodhurst, in the capacity of friend and partner. And without any further allusion to this spasmodic venture, never thereafter spoke of our cousin without some appreciative adjective, as "The worthy Miss Sherwood?" "Your admirable cousin," "That fine—that excellent woman!"

CHAPTER X.

DOUBLEDAY'S return from town gave us leisure to engage in a grand three-days' hunt just organized and attended by the younger men from miles around, and for which we had invited Tom Broadacre, with others, to come up and spend the week at our house. He was the best of good fellows; and though a heedless rider, who had a way of pitching over his horse's head into a muddy ditch or thorn hedge when we were tearing through and over everything in our thickly wooded country, he escaped by sheer luck with nothing but bruises, and brought home as good accounts as anybody. That is, when he went, which he evaded, as often as he could, on any pretext, from over-sleeping himself to Eleanor's cut finger or Cousin Betty's broken *papier-maché* work-table, both of which he undertook to mend.

"For I know a little of everything," he declared, "except the law, and I would know that, only 'tis my profession. The fact is," he told Miles and me, with a confidential twinkle of the eye, "I can go shooting in Edisto any day, but 'tis not always I have a chance at dove-hunting and dear-shooting in-doors." Of which remark I thought it more dignified to take no notice, though Miles laughed.

'Twas a most successful week as regards game, as in addition to foxes and deer, we brought in two wolves and a bear, wild-turkeys and ducks, snipe, grouse, and

innumerable other unconsidered trifles. But 'twas not the game, but the hunt, the chase, the horn sounding clear on the cold early morning air, the neighing of the horses and baying of the hounds, the cheery talk, the pleasant start, the aromatic piney breeze blowing in the riders' faces, the wild rush, the obstacles o'er-leaped, the breathless coming in with the snarling, worrying hounds at the finish—that make the heart stir exultant at the remembrance even now. Or, at the less-exciting bird-shooting, how is fatigue and hunger, cold and mud, discomfort and patient, wearisome waiting forgotten when the dog crouches and the crack of the practiced rifle, through the sedges or over the creek, brings down a certain prize.

On one clear wintry morning, when the meet was three miles off, Dorothy, Eleanor, and Miss Overstreet mounted to ride that far with us. All our visitors surrounded the ladies' horses as nearly as they could; but presently, when the road grew narrower, Dorothy reined in her horse and dropped behind, giving Tom Broadacre a chance, of which he availed himself, to leave me and join Nell. I hardly expected Miss Winter to address me, so distant had been her manner since the wedding, but she whispered:

"Anthony, how well Charlotte Overstreet rides." She knew that with her own eyes glowing and that damask color on her cheek, and sitting her horse as though she had done nothing else but ride, no one near her was likely to be noticed. I have seen famous equestriennes then and since in Rotten Row and Central Park, and do not doubt that the curtailed English habit and stiff hat are more safe and suitable than the flowing riding-robe and plumes of my youth and region.

But these were more graceful, less suggestive of the cast-iron rules of the riding-school, and more so of girlhood, accustomed from earliest years to swift canter through the greenwood, and of the peerless Guinivere as she fled fast through light and shade. Some such thought must have come to me now, for I said:

"Shall I send you over a new volume of Tennyson, with a poem which makes me think of you?" And repented my impulse next moment, for she extended her gloved hand with an enchanting smile:

"I shall accept it as a flag of truce."

I felt Northcote's bold black eyes on us both, and so did she probably; for she said quickly, including both Miles and him in her explanation:

"Anthony is making peace for having celebrated a dead queen in his rhyme the other day instead of some living fair lady."

"I would make no peace," said Northcote, affecting to find something wrong about her bridle, "unless the modern fair one's charms were duly celebrated now, extemporaneous, as:

" ' Had fairest Dorothy, in Dido's place,
Besought Æneas to remain,
He'd gladly lost his fame with Latin race,
Her heart's empire to retain.' "

"Bravo!" cried Miles. "So-so, Brownie," sitting his horse, wildly plunging at a sudden squirrel, like a centaur. But Dorothy looked at me, and knowing my brother's indifference to "books of poetry and that," I felt constrained to rejoin, in his place:

"Had Dorothy but wished the prince to stay
And only looked at him, her eyes
Had overthrown his goddess-mother's sway
And love alone seemed truly wise."

We came out into the open just here, and spurring my innocent beast, he started the others plunging, and gave Northcote, being nearest, an opportunity of soothing and patting Dorothy's. Her face was turned from me, and she called out gayly:

"See what a crowd! This is the limit of the ladies' mile, and we will not detain these Nimrods. 'Tis time to leave them to their cruelties." And wheeling, followed by their grooms, the fair riders parted from us.

As 'twas the last of the hunt, we gave a little supper at our house that night, in which the bear-steak, wild-turkey, venison, and other small deer of our killing played an important part. And there were cards afterward for some and music for others. Dorothy refused, in a manner which was final, to play the flageolet for so many. But she and Eleanor sang their Jacobite songs with great effect, and when nearly every one had left Northcote was prevailed on, at her request, to sing "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" and "Black-eyed Susan," and afterward a French farewell, which I did not know, but 'twas most plaintive and thrilling in his magnificent tones. I saw a wistful, pale look on our Nell's face after this, and was vexed for his own sake that Tom Broadacre immediately after volunteered a Harvard ditty called "The Runaway's Song," of which two of the verses ran:

"Get up, get up, Miss Polly Jones,
The tandem's at the door;
Get up and shake your lovely bones—
'Tis twelve o'clock and more.

"The chaises they have rattled by and nothing stirs around,
And all the world but you and I are snoring safe and sound;

I broke a drunken watchman's nap and he began to mutter,
I gave him just a gentle tap, that helped him to the gutter;
The cur-dog growled an ugly growl and grinned a bitter grin,
I tipped the beast a rats-bane pill to keep his music in.

Get up, get up, Miss Polly Jones," etc.

We were all required to join in the chorus, which gave an excuse for the laughter I could not restrain at the sight of Cousin Betty's disgusted face, fresh as she was from "Sir Charles Grandison." And when he topped this off with an absurd story of Prince William kissing a barber's wife in New York, she made an excuse of showing me a cracked ivory bobbin, that she might whisper:

"'Tis a wonder a gentleman will show himself so undignified."

Her influence, I fear, was used against the poor fellow's success with Nell, and when he went off next day, 'twas after a refusal. He was as cheery as possible, however, and informed me that he was of the kind who never say die, and that he would see us again before long.

The next day was Sunday, and Miles rode away to escort his betrothed to church. Cousin Betty made me the same reproaches for not attending her and Eleanor thither that she used to make to my father long ago. "And 'tis the same book he used to stay with," glancing at my small volume with as much distaste as though it had been a work on the black art. Whereas 'twas nothing worse than his and my old friend Quintus Horatius Flaccus, than whom there is no better company.

When they returned, Richard Northcote rode with them and stayed to dinner. He had much to say

about the sermon, quoting my father to the effect that a bald discourse was often made to sound religious by the use of such words as "taketh" and "maketh," and the like, instead of plain "makes" and "takes." Cousin Betty thought this irreverent and looked grave until an allusion to the singing amused them all. The colonel, who, in these latter years, displayed much zeal in church-singing, but a voice, as Castor said, "Berry like a goat," had undertaken, it appeared, to lead the hundredth psalm, and a cabal secretly formed against him starting it to a different tune at the same moment, the entire stanza was carried through in loud and perfect discordance by the two parties.

"'Twas like the howling of wolves in the wilderness," said Northcote, "and I should have left the church but that I was ashamed when I saw your gentle seriousness, Miss Eleanor."

"It must have been a trial to you," said Nell softly, "with your fine musical ear."

He went off shortly, and late in the afternoon I be-thought me to ride over to see the colonel. 'Twas late when I mounted again after my visit to The Camp, but I suddenly remembered the roots Nell wanted, and there was still time before night to ride to the swamp. I took the direction she had indicated, crossed Chin-quapin Creek, and made my way as straight as I could through the undergrowth, dense and matted. I was to make for old Juba's hut; and so out of the way was it that I twice missed the direction and retraced my steps before I sighted the wretched mud-plastered cabin on the remote edge of the creek. I tied my horse behind a clump of trees, advancing to have some talk with the old negro, whom I dimly remembered as belonging to

the colonel's father, having freed himself during the colonel's absence; and the latter had taken no steps to claim him on his return, Primus being all-sufficient and Juba very old. He looked a century at least, I thought, when I saw him sitting in his doorway, very black, wrinkled, bent almost in two, his dim eyes sunk in his head, his scant woolly hair white, muttering to himself. I did not wonder the superstitious negroes held him in awe. Two buzzards flew up from the roof, where they were resting after some grewsome feast, then flew down again and recommenced their uncouth hopping and noise. I could see some bones and the whitened skull of a horse fastened to the wall inside, and a snake gliding between his feet startled me considerably until he took it in his claw-like hands and I saw that the fangs had been extracted. He did not look at all surprised to see me, though surely human faces here were rare, but peered at me as though a mummy should raise its head, then drop its chin again upon its breast. I sat on a stump and managed to get the old creature to talk to me in his curious mixture of Gullah, which I inflict on no one unaccustomed to it in childhood.

The substance of his discourse was that he could remember the African battle when his tribe was vanquished and the survivors made prisoners; he, the chief's son, yoked with others in gangs and marched along weary miles to the sea-shore. Then the embarkation on the slaver, the dreadful passage across with hatches battened down during the storm, and it seemed like heaven at last, though sold into slavery, to reach the journey's end and be surrounded by faces strange but sympathetic.

'Twas with difficulty even I could understand him, so interlarded was his talk with African words, but I made out that he thought he was about a hundred and fifteen; that he had been well treated by his purchaser, Peter Milton, and left to practical freedom since his death by the latter's son. "How do you make a living?" I asked. And he pointed to bunches of herbs and roots and sundry vials, which he said "Da berry good medicine," and offered to sell me.

"I hear, Juba," I said, lowering my voice, "that you practise Obi. Is that so? And that you make charms to conjure your enemies with."

He gave me a baleful look from his small eyes and said briefly, "Dat fool nigger talk." But on my giving him a coin before mounting, he muttered that a fine young man like me would some time need a love-spell, and he could then give me something that would make all work to my will. I rode slowly, thinking of this old fellow—a prince who would have led bloody frays in his own country, and offered ghastly human sacrifices, and sat at the head of smoking cannibal feasts, ending his days innocuously, at least, beside this lonely American swamp, until the current of my thoughts was turned by the beauty of the evening.

The setting sun cast oblique glistening rays through the dark cypress. The tall pines stood sentinel over a carpet of their fragrant needles, as they had stood in this virgin forest for who knows how many years. Wild vines and scrub-bushes clustered thick in the undergrowth. There was just the twitter of one little belated bird. My horse's hoofs made no noise at all upon the yielding matted bed of fallen leaves. We crossed a little muddy stream, and I saw, all at once, in a shady,

secluded growth of myrtles, two persons, a man and a woman. They talked together, too far for even a murmur of their voices to reach me, and their backs were turned to me; but that profusion of flaxen hair resting on his shoulder, and the very slender, tall form his arm encircled were undoubtedly those of Double-day's young wife. As for the man, though I would not have sworn at that distance and without seeing his face that 'twas Richard Northcote, it looked like no one else.

CHAPTER XI.

As this winter was drawing to a close, it seemed that a spirit of disquiet was in the air, instead of the sweet peace and light-hearted enjoyment inseparable, heretofore, from our home. Or perhaps 'twas merely a demon of unrest which took possession of me. I was often out at this time and riding down the avenue while the last stars still hung in the heavens to catch a glimpse of Aurora fair, and long before the gang-driver's horn broke the drowsy stillness in which the great house and the quarters alike were plunged. This even if I had been up most of the night at some of our country entertainments or in the library over my books. In the latter case, Miles came in to me sometimes, perhaps from Dorothy, or if much later, from the club-room at the tavern, and swore with protests, not of pepper-gingerbread, that I would end by making a bookworm of myself, and I had better have been with him. I had better not have been with him in either case, I knew, especially if 'twas to stand by and see nominally small stakes covering the high play which I was powerless to prevent. Northcote's fascination for my brother was such that though his loving heart was mine as ever, I had, by my own retirement from what angered and grieved me, much less of his company now. Sometimes I did go down to The George, and would have enjoyed an occasional evening there with the pleasant company, but Northcote's

inevitable appearance in Miles' wake, and their subsequent retreat to the private card-room after a perfunctory invitation to myself, spoiled my pleasure. *Homo sum* is a wholesome check to any one who would play self-sufficient mentor to his fellows; and in view of past weakness of my own and my brother's restiveness, I had said no word about these matters since I had shown him my father's letter. But one night, coming in excited with winning, and with wine perhaps—Northcote, by physician's orders, he said, never exceeded one glass—he spoke himself of the evening's game.

"Pollux, at least," said I dryly, "will soon be proficient. He tells Castor he is growing rich from coin dropped under the table and left there for the waiters."

"Lying scamp," he cried carelessly, "he has no business down there to wait on us. The tavern waiters are enough. Is it because you are afraid of making Castor rich that you will not come, or because you are superior to such follies?"

If I had been represented in the odious position of prudent and supercilious virtue, I knew 'twas by Northcote. I did not answer, but looked at him; instantly his handsome flushed face changed, and he put his hand on my shoulder.

"You know very well, Anthony, that I was but jesting, and 'twould be better for me if I were like you. Perhaps when Dorothy fixes the day and I become a domestic man 'twill be different." A touch of wistfulness in his tone knocked at my heart.

"You will be imprudent to wait for that, Miles, for I heard long ago that no one wins finally with North-

cote; and you know, my dear brother, that in any difficulty, what little I have is yours; but," with a laugh, "I would rather Northcote did not have it." I knew, as did he, that outside a liberal allowance he actually owned slaves only, on whom he could not easily raise money without my father's knowledge, and the latter's abhorrence of what he called debts of dishonor we both knew also.

"Thank you," said Miles absently, "but I am ahead, I assure you."

"Just now," I rejoined significantly, but with a yawn, half-simulated, he took his flat candlestick and went off to bed.

For two or three weeks he was more at home, pleasing Cousin Betty and Eleanor mightily, or came back early from the Winters'. I called there one evening for him, on my way from supper at a distant plantation, and he had already left; but Northcote, who it appeared had just come in, was leaning over Dorothy's harpsichord, singing to her accompaniment. And I stayed but a few minutes, though she made a little play of getting out her flageolet in a hurry for my pleasure. Northcote took tea at Woodhurst once or twice during this interval, and I feared our Nell's eyes were the brighter for his coming. After one of these occasions Cousin Betty waited for me at the foot of the winding stairs, bedroom candle in hand, to whisper:

"Richard Northcote seems to find a vast deal of pleasure in his visits here, don't you think, Anthony? He is monstrous agreeable, to my mind, and if Nell should take a fancy——"

"God forbid!" I had nearly said, but bethinking myself, refrained. I had no proof to bring forward of

the stories against him, and as for what I had seen—I had been talking that afternoon with Doubleday on the overseer's steps, when Northcote rode up the avenue, and his condescending nod to Mrs. Doubleday had met scarcely an acknowledgment from her habitually downcast eyes. I contented myself with saying with emphasis: "I have reason to know he has not thought of Nell; and, dear Cousin Betty, you would not do her such wrong as make her think of him."

She lingered still to say: "Oh, if you mean Dorothy. He knows, like all the world, of her engagement to Miles, and 'tis only his friendship for both makes him so attentive."

I stood, after the good soul left me, in a shock of surprise she never knew she had given. Was it possible that Northcote's devotion to Dorothy was so open that it needed to be accounted for? And was Miles careless, or indulgent, or fascinated? Oh, if I were Miles! This was one unquiet night whose dawn found me riding out under the morning star.

In the earliest spring came a letter from my father, saying that he would come on by rail and meet such of us in Charleston as cared to be there for race week. In my present mood any change would have been welcome, and I consented to act as escort to Cousin Betty and Eleanor. Miles did not care to go, on account of Dorothy, I supposed, and I forebore to press him, though I foresaw that he would drift again into his evenings at The George, all the more easily as Richard Northcote, taking no notice of his defection, had made himself doubly and charmingly agreeable. 'Twas only the day before we were starting when the Winters, coming over for a game of whist, asked Cousin Betty

to take charge of Dorothy as far as the city, where she would stay with her uncle for the Jockey Club ball. Cousin Betty willingly consented, and I took the first opportunity of offering to Miles my position as escort now that his betrothed would be of the party. He hesitated, looking somewhat confused, and glanced toward Northcote, lounging near Nell, who drew near, asking:

“Did you speak to me?”

“No,” said Miles, “but I was considering how to reconcile my engagement with Anthony’s proposal that I shall go down to Charleston in his place.”

“Is Mr. Anthony Ashley going down?” his face darkening visibly. “I did not know.” Then, with something like a sneer, “Would you be cruel enough to deprive him of that pleasure?”

“Oh, for that matter,” said Miles simply, “he does not care more for horses than you and I do; and there are no very good ones to run. But there are other things—and now that Miss Winter is to go—see here, Northcote, we could postpone it, or you could come too.”

“You know that I cannot!” with something like violence, though in a low tone. “My mother is too ill, and I can’t leave. ’Tis just my cursed luck at this time. And as for a postponement—’tis as you please, though——” He shrugged his shoulders and the unpleasant look showed under his mustache.

I walked off, not wishing to be discourteous in my own home, and guessing that this engagement was somehow connected with their gaming. Whatever it was, he was pleasant enough the rest of the evening, and Miles told me at bed-time that he had decided to

put off his trip to Charleston until some time when we could all stay longer.

He went over to Fairview for Dorothy in the morning, with the gig, and brought her back, to be transferred to our travelling-coach, looking as dazzling fair as Hebe herself. I find myself constantly comparing this beautiful creature to some heathen goddess, and 'tis trite enough. But, with a divinity's charms, she possessed a divinity's undoubted power to thrill and subjugate; and was like a modern poet's description of a daughter of the gods, as she was divinely tall and most divinely fair. She was dressed for this journey, I remember, in a close-fitting pelisse, frogged and braided, and edged with some gray fur, her lovely eyes shining under the brim of a great hat, and carried a large muff of the same gray fur, with many little pockets in it for handkerchief, smelling-bottle, and the like. I took this from her as she mounted the coach-steps, and a note fell out, which, as I restored, she hastily thrust into her reticule. But I could not help seeing that the address was in the same hand as the one which the Landgrave's picture had concealed.

Our horses, in the sun of Jupiter's approving smile, went well, and 'twas early when, after a moment's pause at the Bull's Head Tavern, we went, driving for a better roadway, past the statue of Pitt, decapitated once accidentally, but wearing the line of mending now like a necklace around its majestic neck. Down King Street into Market, past a "licensed stand" for drays, displacing a drove of buzzards, self-constituted scavengers, who hopped grotesquely about the market-place, and so through Church, to take our ease at our inn, after driving Miss Winter to her uncle's residence

on the corner of Atlantic Street and Zig-Zag Alley. We might, on the next day, which was Washington's Birthday, have heard the oration delivered before several societies in St. Philip's Church, as was then the custom, but we did not go, having other engagements. My father had not yet arrived when we left the hotel that evening for the theatre, where Dorothy was to meet us in the box, coming with her uncle. She illuminated the box for us, and her delicious laugh was music to hear when her uncle, fat and scant of breath, settled himself down panting, to read from the heading of the play-bill: " 'This theatre, in case of fire, has thirteen doors, all opening outward.' That is comfortable to know."

"Why, uncle, do you think they will set fire to the building just to celebrate the day?"

"There is no knowing," solemnly, "what may happen."

The play that evening, very well acted by the elder Wallack and Miss Placide, was "The Belle's Stratagem." There was a very pretty masquerade scene in one act—pretty, at least, for those days—and some of the men in the pit stood up the better to see. "Down! down!" cried the indignant ones in the rear. One of the former, a rather rough fellow, turned and pointed significantly to a beaver bonnet in front of him, monstrously large, and further increased in size by many upright feathers. A general laugh, the cause of which puzzled the unconscious wearer of the hat, restored him to good-humor, and he sat down. Our ladies were indignant at his boldness, even gentle Eleanor being goaded into saying "she supposed this was a free country, where every one might wear what she chose."

And when I asked "if meek, miserable, wretched man had no rights whatever," Cousin Betty, with apparent irrelevance, wanted to know if I "would like my sister, or any of them, to look as if they came out of Noah's ark."

"Not having had the honor of Mrs. Shem, Ham or Japhet's acquaintance," I ventured, "I cannot say if their costume was becoming."

"I notice, however," said Dorothy, putting up the long-handled quizzing-glass she chose to carry to the play, "that you have not tried to revive the dress of those ladies' husbands in your own person," giving a look at my imported suit, which, in those youthful days of purple and fine linen, approached to dandyism. A weakness for which, after all, I do not blush at now.

The drop-curtain, a novel one at that time, being one large mirror which reflected the whole brilliant house, had just gone up on the next act and ended our unprofitable chat. 'Twas while some verses in honor of the "Immortal Washington" were introduced that a slight smell of scorching and a faint mist of smoke went through the building. The terrific thrill that, in one great shock, affects a crowd, caused many to leap to their feet. The next moment there was a rush in the pit and a scrambling and climbing over benches, threatening a destructive panic. Wallack, hurrying to the foot-lights, appealed in vain for order. Reduced to pantomime, he pointed to where, the scenery drawn aside, a great pool of water showed how quickly and effectually the buckets, kept in readiness, had extinguished the slight flame. Many of the audience re-seated themselves, while the play proceeded, but many did not return. I had tried during the first confusion

to keep our company quiet. Several young beaux, however, in attendance on the girls, had burst open the box-door and pushed forward into the throng. Mr. Winter, Cousin Betty, and Nell were following, when I forcibly detained them with my back to the door, and I think saved them some bruises. By the time the brief excitement was over, they were ready to sit down, very pale, but laughing, though nervously, at their own alarm. So great had been the panic that 'twas like a dream—thinking of it afterward—that Dorothy, who had risen, but not left her place, with a curious smile on her white face, her beautiful lips trembling, had clasped her hands on my arm, and murmured so close that her soft hair brushed my cheek: “You remember reading of the Richmond fire long ago, Anthony? If—if 'tis like that, though you do not care for me, Anthony, you will not leave me, but let me stay with you to the end.” I may have fancied it, for already the color was mantling in her cheek, and she was listening with apparent interest to the last act. Moved by a sudden impulse, I took up the snowy fan lying on the ledge in front and said, pointing to the faintly written lines within the sticks:

“The writer of these might protest that our little fire was nothing in point of danger to the flame that this toy can raise by Dolly's lovely fingers pressed.”

She glanced at it and said languidly: “I am tired of that fan. Miles has given me a new one. You may keep it to remember to-night; or—you may throw it away.”

O Dolly, Dolly, long dead now, will I ever grow so old, or will I be so cold within my coffin, that a touch of that soft, feathered trifle, kept despite of res-

olution, cannot thrill me like a fancied clasp of clinging white hands, or an imagined murmur of tremulous magic tones!

A slight stir in the group behind during the closing scene apprised me of some one entering, but I was surprised when we arose at the end to find my father's keen eyes meet mine.

"I have but just arrived," he explained, "and meant to await you at the hotel; but some foolish rumor of a fire made me hurry round, to find you all as comfortable as possible."

I sat up in his room until nearly dawn, listening to his account of the exciting events and stirring eloquence now moving the country's heart to wild pulsations, felt in all its parts. I need not repeat what he said, for it has since become matter of history, but will only say that the heat had risen to such a point in Charleston that the whole city was suffering from a military fever. Even on Sunday at St. Michael's, our ladies, with the rest of the congregation, were much disturbed by the drilling just outside of the militia—the "Beats," as the street-arabs christened one company resembling Falstaff's in picturesque variety of uniform. Some of the vestrymen went out and vigorously protested, but this not availing, a petition was addressed later to the honorable intendant and wardens that they would be pleased to have this martial practice confined to weekdays or removed from the neighborhood, "as their previous edict against pasturing of cows and mules in the grave-yard during divine service had proved effectual."

We were in something of a whirl of coming and going for many following days. There were—chief

events—the daily races at Washington Course. Miss Winter's uncle being one of the stewards, she affected a superior knowledge on the comparative merits of Fan Tail and Jolly Tar, which involved herself and Nell in the payment of more gloves than they liked to remember, until I had lost to them a compensatory number of some ridiculously small size and “of York tan, be sure and remember.” Cousin Betty disapproved of wagers, except, perhaps, a small sixpence or twelvepence at whist. She also disapproved of the throng of gallants that followed us about everywhere and of the “unlady-like” act of running to look out at windows, of which, despite Mrs. Hamilton's precepts, both girls were guilty. Tom Broadacre was here for the week, and as genially devoted to Nell as though he now met her for the first time.

Then there were engagements my father made for me and himself to dine with old friends, and club suppers in the long room at the Carolina Coffee House, with much drinking of toasts and singing of “Araby's Daughter” and the like. The St. Ursula gave a ball, where my father said in jest that the club was so named, doubtless, because there were eleven thousand virgins wandering about in its hall not knowing what should become of them. So numerous were the engagements between the ladies and so often was I sent for Dorothy, or so often went for her, that I deserved well of the city for helping tread down the foot-path through Lightwood Alley leading to her uncle's, and an old iron lamp hanging over a gateway there became as familiar an object as the library chandelier at home. I was disposed to refuse my escort on shopping tours until I found the “Franklin's Head” book-store on King

Street was just next their new milliner, Miss Carmen, at the sign of the Double Gold Heart. The book-store was a pleasant enough lounging-place, and I have skimmed through the reviews and one or two new books from London, while they were in raptures next door over taffeta ribbons and thread-lace tippets, and plumes and flowers, and lovely gold-sprigged muslin, and gros de Naples, and open-work silk stockings, and Leg-horns and Bantams; which terms if I get wrong 'tis not Cousin Betty's fault, who invariably appealed to my taste on the way back in the coach. She also left it to me to choose at the Franklin's Head some annuals or books of beauty, which works have not now the vogue they then possessed. She wished to give them as Easter tokens to friends in the country; and desirous of pleasing her, I just took all I could find; and then the ladies exclaimed at the size of the package.

"Good heavens!" cried Dorothy, turning them over when it was opened. "What will you do with all these, Miss Sherwood? There is 'The Pearl,' 'Affection's Gift,' 'Friendship's Offering,' 'The Gem,' 'Keepsake,' 'Winter's Wreath,' 'Summer's Blossoms,' 'Spring Flowers,' 'Fall Leaves,' 'All Seasons,' 'The Token,' 'The Amulet,' 'Cupid's Album.' How many are there?"

"My dear Anthony," cried my cousin, fluttered, "I only wanted two or three."

"Never mind," said I imperturbably, "'twas my purchase, and you may do what you like with them."

"Let me have this one," said Nell, laughing, "'The Keepsake;' it has such inviting contents: 'The Torn Hat,' 'Charity,' 'The Cottage Door,' 'The Robber of the Rhine,' 'The Coquette,' 'The Vale of Arcady.'"

“And I will take ‘Cupid’s Album,’” cried Dorothy; “but what are these two little ones? ‘Cobwebs for Flies’ and ‘Limed Twigs to Catch Young Birds,’ by Jane and Ann Taylor.”

“Oh, those I bought myself,” said Cousin Betty, confused. “I thought, Anthony, they might be useful for Castor and Pollux.”

I could not help laughing. ’Twas little my Castor cared for reading. I had scarcely seen him since bringing him down, and my frequent long absences from the hotel gave him an abundant leisure for his own pursuits. I had begun by a ceremonious threat of flaying him alive in case the patrol caught him out after St. Michael’s nine-o’clock bell and tattoo and I had to redeem him from the guard-house. But he had coaxed me into giving him a pass, and was hardly to be found at the hotel now, except for a short while, at my toilet.

CHAPTER XII.

THE chief event after this was to be a grand fancy-dress ball to be given at a friend's on Broad Street, in whose spacious rooms Washington had once stepped a minuet. For this affair Dorothy, who said my education had been much neglected, was giving me preparatory lessons in the "Spanish Dance," for which Eleanor played an accompaniment on a cracked old harpsichord resurrected from Mr. Winter's garret, her smiling face turned over one shoulder to see us. My father coming in once on this little scene said he hoped "Lalla Rookh" would not be incongruous enough to dance a Spanish dance. As he was not going to this ball, Miss Winter went up with Nell to put on her costume to show him, and came down resplendent, though not dark enough in complexion for her part, he said truly. Everything Oriental was just then the rage, however, and 'twas certainly Lalla Rookh's misfortune if she was less fair than Dorothy. My father looked at the dazzling vision with his usual fatherly admiration, tempered with an ironic smile.

"*Cui flavam religas comam, simplex munditiis?*" he cried, and she answered pouting:

"Lalla Rookh may as well dance a Spanish dance as listen to Latin compliments."

"She is so sure 'tis a compliment," said I; but indeed 'twould have needed an artist and a poet to describe the effect of her shimmering golden gauze falling

away from snowy arms, or caught by jewelled belt around the slender waist, and of braided tresses descending, twined with pearls, below the knee.

"Is she not lovely, papa?" cried Nell, running up to him. "I must have something Eastern, too. How would you like me in sleeves *à la Sultane* and a Circassian turban?"

"I like you quite well as you are," said he, with absent kiss. And when they left us he asked me to take a short stroll with him on the Battery. When we came out on Atlantic Street, his limp was more evident than usual and he seemed weary, so I offered him my arm. His taking it was only a form, he leaned so slightly, but he was pleased to do it, I could see. 'Twas a dreary, cloudy evening, scarce any one on the Battery, and as we walked up and down by the eastern wall a misty rain dimmed the air. The water was running in gray, white-capped waves, over which a gull rose and dipped. And looking outward, Castle Pinckney, the far shore of Sullivan's Island, the Hundred Pines, and the palmettoes on James Island were veiled in mist.

"I had letters from Doubleday this morning," he began. "They were satisfactory as to the place and the hands, but I wonder, Anthony, if he has not too much to look after. He is an industrious fellow, who gives really too much of his own time to me, and I would not like to take advantage of this."

"There is Miles," said I, but he interrupted.

"Is Miles there much or at all? From these letters I should say not, so slightly is he mentioned. Some disquieting reports came to me through private sources while I was in Washington, but I choose to hear noth-

ing of my sons save from themselves; not"—quickly, as I opened my lips to speak—"not from each other. I appreciate your scruples." We walked a few moments in silence. Then he said abruptly: "You are going to this ball, of course. Will it be as Feramorz, by any chance?"

I colored hotly, which I would not have done a week ago, though as secure in my strength now as then. The truth was there had been some jesting about my taking the part—Cousin Betty considering that there should be a prince for the princess—and as Miles was not here 'twas mine naturally, and Dorothy's silence had seemed to sanction what might have been ill-advised. I was glad, then, to be able to look my father full in the eye and answer:

"No, sir, I had no intention of taking the part. If Miles had been here, 'twould have been his."

"And he should be here," in his decided tone, "in attendance on his betrothed."

He took my arm again, which he had dropped for a moment, and went on with an indescribable softening of his voice:

"My dear Anthony, my second self, for you and your fine sense of right I would answer with my life. But there are battles in which there is nothing to gain and a timely flight saves deep and deadly wounds."

I would have turned haughtily enough on any one else speaking so, but 'twas actually a relief to deny nothing, but to lean there with him on the railing, and have the spray blow in our faces, and watch the sea-gulls skimming and wheeling, and wonder mechanically how long it would take the mist to swallow up the island opposite. Only I felt, from the heaviness

at my heart, as though the wound he spoke of had already been dealt me. He gazed out over the gray foamy water with an abstracted look and spoke in a lower tone.

“I knew a man once, young, ardent, impetuous, sent from home to finish his studies in England. But before he left an engagement with a young girl, still at school, had been arranged, largely by the respective families. 'Twas a frequent custom at his university for the men to run down to any good performance at the London theatres. And once, taken by a friend, behind the scenes at the Surrey he met a woman——” here he paused a moment, going on again, “a girl, not beautiful, perhaps, but different to him from any one he had ever met, and who was one of the brilliant Mrs. Jordan's troop. Unlike the others, she had a gentle timidity and refinement far removed from the ordinary stage manner. And he recognized this so completely that though meeting her first amid the glamour of theatre surroundings, he soon avoided the theatre entirely, seeing her only in her own quiet home where her mother lived. I think he was unconscious how the interest of his whole life grew to be divided between her and his studies, though sometimes ridiculed by classmates for his abstinence from their amusements, until a letter from home awoke him to the truth. It told him how his young betrothed, averse to society and considering herself in every way bound to him, cultivated the domestic arts and prepared herself to make him a happy home; and the writer congratulated him on the future possession of so much beauty, sweetness, and domestic worth. He had this letter in his pocket at his next visit, but had not yet spoken, when, all

pale and trembling, she told him what she had often tried to say before: that she had been married very young to a worthless brute, who only appeared sometimes to threaten and take most of her earnings. 'Twas the temptation of his life, seeing her sweet face white and feeling her little hand cold, to plead that she would take refuge with him for always. But he told her of his own bond and said, 'We must part,' and she whispered 'Yes' with pale lips. 'Twas only after a long wandering about on one pretext or other, during which he heard of her death from a cold taken in some provincial barn, that he had courage to return home and redeem his promise. I don't know"—breaking off with a sort of laugh which was more like a sob—"why I tell you this old story, which no one has ever heard before, unless to show you that none of us are as solitary in our trials and experiences as we believe."

I pressed his hand gratefully in return for a confidence which it cost him so much to make, and neither of us spoke for a while. Then I said cheerfully, "You would be better pleased with Woodhurst letters if I were there to take some of the burden off Doubleday? I can start in the morning."

"Act entirely according to your judgment, Anthony; but your influence has always been great with Miles, and I have been annoyed about him lately. Why need he so exceed his allowance as to desire to raise money irregularly, which Doubleday refused to do for him when last in town? Oldfield, too, knew about it, in the way of business, from a money-lender offering him the paper. He might better have applied to me directly to increase his income, though I have done

so twice and cannot see how his expenses can be so great."

I did not feel called on for a comment, but offered again to leave at once, and then if Miles chose he might come down.

"Very well, then. If not, I can escort the ladies home, or some friend will be going that way. I have nearly made up my mind not to return to Washington. Matters there are running so high that I must either go against my own convictions or relinquish the valued friendships of a life-time, neither of which I am willing to do."

And our talk drifted off to matters political and kept us walking up and down in the mist until night set in.

'Twas with surprise and disappointment Cousin Betty and Eleanor met my announced intention of starting early next morning for home, and would only reluctantly carry a few words of adieu I left for Dorothy and an excuse from the party to the play that evening, which was to see Mr. Wallack in "The Rivals."

My dear brother, though little expecting to see me at Woodhurst, and already preparing to go out, was as warmly delighted with my sudden appearance as my heart could desire. He instantly hung up his hat again on the rack, and called lustily for Chloe, Lucinda, Daphne, Nubilia, and a host of others, to serve me up a hot supper directly, under various appalling penalties, while Castor disappeared into the kitchen with Pollux, to show off town airs and boast, like a Gascon, of town conquests.

During the meal and afterward Miles sat beside me, hearing with genuine delight of my enjoyment in the

trip, of the girls' triumphs—who could have doubted his devotion to his lady, however malign the influence which kept him from her, who saw his face glow when her name was mentioned?—of my father and cousin's health, of various friends. Of news here, he said, there was little to tell. One or two dances which he had not attended, a cock-fight in the yard of The George, a club-supper, a race between the Overstreets' Leander and his roan, Peterkin, the roan winning.

“And how was it you tired of town?”

“Doubleday wanted me to see some trees at the Roost, before giving orders for their cutting down; the races were over, and my father is there to escort the girls.”

I imagined there was a slight disquiet on his face at mention of my father, but could not be sure, for Northcote, tired of waiting for him at the tavern, came in now, veiled his surprise, and possibly annoyance, at seeing me, under some civil inquiries, and went off again when he found Miles would not go, after telling me, in answer to my question, that his mother was still very ill, and more than ever dependent on Mrs. Doubleday's services.

“An excellent sort of person for her position,” he said carelessly. “Hardly companionable for my mother, being without early advantages, but quite useful.”

“Doubleday is so much in love with work,” Miles remarked after he had gone away, “that he leaves that poor young woman too much alone, and I'm glad Mrs. Northcote has a fancy to have her with her.”

“Now that I am here he will have more leisure; and you, too, Miles, if you care to go down to town and return with the party.”

"Well, you see," embarrassed, "I would, of course, have gone down before, but Northcote held me to my engagement to give him his revenge, as I had just won largely. And he cannot get away now, and is, besides, a little hard up for funds. He has entire authority on the place, but being left dependent on a woman is a hardship. And 'tis easy to get into money scrapes!"

"You find it so?" I could not help saying.

"Anthony," he interrupted violently, "I will not have you preaching to me, who are my junior. Not another word! 'Tis enough that my father——" then he stopped, and said in his usual tone: "Come now, let us talk about something pleasant. Let us talk about Dorothy."

I went down with him next evening to The George, a pleasant ride through the starlit night.

The tavern, a great wooden building with low shelving roof, and many lights twinkling, was inviting enough when we reached it. Its swinging sign bore an effigy which had been called The Royal George, before the colony had repudiated that stout and elderly Hanoverian. The tavern-keeper, being, like Mrs. Gilpin, of frugal mind, though he changed the name to The George Washington in republican times, kept the same sign, which was made to do duty for the Father of his Country, with the royal arms painted out on the reverse side and a Union flag substituted. The place itself had been called The George in colonial days, and was still so called, though with different intention. It had a wide porch in front, and dogs lying there, who barked drowsily at us and went to sleep again, and many horses were tied to the trees around.

Inside, the low raftered ceiling and bare floor were illuminated by a roaring fire of huge oak logs. Near this Colonel Milton, with some others of the elders, was preparing for a game of whist, and in the mean time he was finishing some story, good, no doubt, from the applause which followed, but calculated, for reasons, to turn the air blue. Long pipes were in demand and snuff-boxes circulated. The waiters were busy arranging tables with cards and candles for parties at seven-up and carrying bottles of wine hither and thither, or tumblers of hot and strong rum-punch for those who preferred it. Miles and I were speedily included in different parties.

Richard Northcote did not make his appearance until the evening was well advanced, and then came in frowning. He went from table to table, leaning on the players' chairs and making a few small bets; and after a while took the hand of a player who was leaving. He was near me, and I inquired for his mother.

"Oh, complaining, complaining as usual," in an impatient tone. "She says she is very ill," then noting Miles' gravity as well as my own, he cleared his brow and proceeded with forced gayety. "I am ill myself; that is, with vexation. What is the matter with the mails, or is the highway here still unsafe? I fail every week or so to get letters which I find have been sent me. 'Tis a cursed shame for things to be so mis-managed."

"Your servants may be clueless," said I, selecting my card. Mrs. Doubleday, whom I had met half a mile out on the mail-road that very day, had mentioned to me, somewhat confusedly, that she trusted none of

the negroes when she expected a letter, but walked out herself to meet the mail-coach.

"No servant who has been with me more than a week is ever careless," said Northcote calmly.

Midnight was the hour for closing the tavern, and long before this most of the elder men had gone home to bed. When twelve struck the other parties began to disperse, and good-nights were exchanged on the porch and front path before riding away. The landlord walked through the rooms, and Richard Northcote having said something to Miles about *écarté*, to which my brother assented, said to the tavern-keeper, giving orders for closing up, "We will need but one table, Fitz, a fresh pair of candles, and a bottle of Madeira."

Fitz, accustomed to their late hours, gave these orders, and leaving a sleepy waiter in charge went to bed. I could not help thinking that Northcote, at first annoyed at my presence, took now a malicious pleasure in showing me how easily Miles would yield to the double fascination of the game and himself. I stood silently by while the cards were cut, dealt, and the first hand played. The stakes were professedly small, but I had long known that this was a mere cover.

"Now is your time to bet, Anthony," cried Miles with a laugh, but I did not choose, and crossed the room to overlook a few lingering seven-up players. I could from there, with less appearance of watching, see the *écarté* table.

Luck was with Miles at first, and repeatedly he claimed the points and the *vôle*. Very often, too, he drained his wine-glass. Northcote swore that

Fitz kept right good Madeira and cursed his churlish doctor, who would let him have but a glass at a time. After a while Miles made some poor play, and the tide turned. 'Twas easy to see that my brother could never play long against Northcote. In this game, requiring perfect command of feature, his frank countenance was at disadvantage, compared to Northcote's impenetrable expression, still further concealed by his heavy mustache. "*J'ai la pointe, monsieur, j'ai la vôle,*" I heard him say quietly, more than once. A sudden thought came to me. What could be his motive for selecting Miles so persistently and continuously for his much-flattered companion at play, where there were so many young fellows at hand, of large means and eager enough to learn from a master of *écarté*? If—if it could be that paying clandestine court to Dorothy, whose beauty appealed to his senses rather than his cold heart, who was an only daughter and an heiress besides, he might hope so to involve Miles as to bring him into disgrace with her parents and his. The game of seven-up ended and the players left. I, too, would go, unquiet and irritated. I could do no good by remaining.

"I am going now, Miles. I'm sleepy."

"I'll go, too," he muttered; "wait a minute."

"Getting alarmed for your patrimony?" said Northcote, raising his eyebrows in an irritating smile. "Then let your brother take you home; but you lose your chance of retrieving losses. I must return to Paris, I see, to find a player of any nerve."

"You might go to a farther and warmer country," said I, with a polite bow, "before you could find a player equal to yourself."

He half started up, a look of furious anger transforming his face; then, with wonderful self-control, sank back instantly and rejoined with perfect coolness:

"I appreciate your compliment highly, and cannot but admire your acquaintance with foreign lands."

"What are you talking about?" cried Miles impatiently, with whom his first remarks had had their effect. "Of course I will play you another game, or two, if Anthony will wait."

He was soon deep in the game once more. I scorned to make any further attempt, under Northcote's eyes, at breaking it up; so, rousing the negro boy, now sound asleep on a hall bench, to bring my horse round, I rode home. My brother came in two hours after, perhaps; for although in bed I was still awake when he looked in at my door, saying:

"Not asleep, Anthony?" and entered. Even by firelight he looked haggard. "Well," he commenced with a sort of laugh, "my luck never changed. I lost all I had and five hundred more, which I have not and don't know where to get."

"I have that much on hand which I can certainly let you have."

"'Tis good of you," turning to go, then coming back quite close to the bedside.

"I wonder," with a sort of bravado, "what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will think of my confession. I staked my chestnut mare against his bay, and lost that, too; and then in an effort to win all back I lost—Pol-lux."

"Good God, Miles!" I cried, sitting up straight, "can you seriously mean it or has the Madeira gone to your head? If you must displease my father so deeply, why

was it not one of the others? But Pollux—your Pollux—'tis incredible!"

"Softly; 'tis not quite so bad as you think. I was near quarrelling with Northcote at the mere suggestion until I found what he really meant. 'Twas only that the chestnut I had lost—my favorite under saddle, you know—that against him I should stake the ownership of Pollux for a month; actually only his services for that time, that he might give a few lessons in hair-dressing, which he learned down in Charleston, to Northcote's fellow."

I said not a word more, for 'twas easy to see under Miles' careless manner how deeply he felt it, and what a bitter moment 'twas for him next morning, when Pollux, most reluctant even though his stay would be temporary, rode over on the chestnut to Oakland with Mr. Miles Ashley's compliments to Mr. Northcote.

CHAPTER XIII.

'Twas inevitable that this matter, talked of in the neighborhood, should to Miles' detriment be known to all our family, and Dorothy, too, if they returned before the month was out. I would have said this to Miles, but thought that he would either attach no significance to it as regarded Northcote, or else, in the rare fierce anger of a gentle-mannered man, would suspect more than I knew of his intimate friend, which extremity, in view of Mrs. Northcote's illness, would be untimely; so I devoted myself to work, and coming and going constantly had the satisfaction of seeing Miles relieve Doubleday of many tasks of supervision, and, forsaking the club-room for the present, spend his leisure at home or visiting.

Colonel Milton, never opening his lips about the rumor he must have heard, took to coming over every evening, saying, "*Sacre-bleu!* The George had been but a pis-aller for him during the ladies' absence, which d—d if he could stand any longer." And his whist and his stories helped amuse Miles and Castor as well.

Stopping at the overseer's cottage, about a week after this, to look over some accounts with him, I found his wife there, she having left Mrs. Northcote a trifle better. She was writing at a table, and when I entered, pushed the paper, which looked as if she were

practising a copy, into a drawer. She was probably improving her handwriting, and with a flush of eagerness on her cheek looked very handsome, though with a furtive and underbred expression always. She remained in the room while we went through the accounts, and when the overseer was called out on the porch by one of the hands, some talk outside ensued, and Doubleday came back, appearing excited.

"Mr. Ashley," he said, "here is a piece of news I reckon your brother will be uncommon displeased to hear. Mr. Northcote has been taken very sick after some coffee Pollux carried to him in his room, and the doctor saying 'twas the effect of poison, the fellow has run off and cannot be found."

"Pollux!" I cried; "why, 'tis impossible! He is a lazy boy, but cowardly and very good-natured. He would not hurt a fly, and Mr. Northcote has treated him well. 'Tis some lie!"

I heard a sort of smothered sound behind me at this moment, and Doubleday, running forward, caught his wife, white and gasping, as she was falling in a faint. She presently recovered on a window being opened and water given her, and said weakly that she was over-tired from night-watching with Mrs. Northcote.

"To be sure, 'tis enough, and I must run in like a fool with such talk," said Doubleday ruefully. "Women are so different from us, Mr. Ashley, and I fear I'm but a rough man to have charge of one."

I left the good fellow fussing over her with sal-volatile and such stuffs, and went up quickly to the house. The news was already known, as could be told by the visible excitement of the house-servants, their whispering in corners and anxious looks at me. I went up, three

steps at a time, to Miles' room, and there was Castor on his knees before him, wildly blubbering.

"O Mas' Miles, you know my brudder Pollux, dat he ain't de boy fer do such a ting! O Lawd! what he bin run off fer! O my Lawd! O my Christ!" and more lamentations.

"Silence, Castor! not another word. Go down to the kitchen this moment. Have I not enough to worry me without you? Go."

"Well, lemme put on yo' boots den, Mas' Miles," scrambling up—he waited on us both during Pollux's absence—to help Miles with the boots he was hastily drawing on.

"No, go at once! Well, Anthony, what do you make of these reports about my poor fellow?"

"Nothing," briefly, "until you or I have ridden over to see."

"I am going now," and within ten minutes he was riding out of the avenue with a countenance ten years older and graver than that he wore this morning, riding about the place with a jest and a laugh for every pick-aninny he met. He did not come back until night, when the kind colonel was sitting with me, his old face as anxious as my own.

"Northcote is much better," he said, at once dropping tiredly into a chair. "The antidotes have taken effect and he is entirely out of danger; will be about in a day or two, the doctor says. His mother is now the worse of the two. Her foolish maid gave her an exaggerated account of her son's illness: he was dying and so on, and she has had a very bad attack. The household is in great confusion, and there was no possibility of getting any information about my poor boy.

If he would only come here and trust to me! I would not believe the whole world against him."

"Why might not some one have tampered with the coffee before he carried it?" suggested the colonel.

"I asked that talkative maid of Mrs. Northcote's, and she said that Dick had given his own body-servant a pass to visit his people in the next parish, and Pollux had sole charge of preparing over a spirit-lamp and taking in the cup of coffee which Northcote drinks, in French fashion, in bed mornings."

"He'd better take a julep," growled the colonel, to hide his sympathy with Miles' distress, which presently became so great, at thought of what trouble his own passion for play had brought on his childhood's play-mate and attached henchman, that he went away and left us to be alone.

In a few days Northcote was out again, his mother remaining very ill; but nothing was heard of the fugitive, though an active search was prosecuted for miles around. The week after came a letter from my father which read:

"What is the meaning of the advertisement I send you, cut out of the morning paper? I do not remember that any of the house-servants at Oaklands was named Pollux. The description answers to Miles' boy, but of course that is a mere accident.

"The ladies have let one engagement after another detain us here, against Jupiter's earnest protests, as he prefers his own commodious stables to even the Rising Sun, which is certainly a little crowded. The old fellow has some excuse for grumbling just now, for he is not very well, having a painful rheumatic seizure.

I think I shall let him drive me to Woodhurst on Thursday. Mr. Winter, who travels that way shortly to visit his brother, has kindly offered to take charge of our ladies, his coach being very roomy, and as they seem disposed to linger yet, Betty and Nell will stay at his house on Zig-Zag Alley until then," etc.

The advertisement inclosed, and headed by a rough cut of a darkey running, with bundle on stick over his shoulder, was as follows:

"Ran away, the 15th instant, from Oaklands plantation, on the Santee, negro boy Pollux, 5 feet 3 inches high, pleasant face, very plausible. Black jacket and trousers, check shirt, and hat covered with oil-cloth of a dark green color. Fifty dollars reward."

I handed the letter to Miles, and he broke out violently at what he called Northcote's outrageous haste.

"He might have left the matter to me," he cried. "The boy must be hidden in the neighborhood, and when he turns up he may very well leave him to his master to examine and punish; especially considering how he came to be with him and only for a time."

Much as I felt for him, and for poor wretched Pollux, too, the circumstances would certainly justify some rigor on Northcote's side. So I drew Miles' attention rather to my father's coming at this most unpropitious time.

"'Tis most unhappy," he said in a subdued tone, "for—for, Anthony, he is already displeased with me. Some letters of his from Washington I thought too hard and I have not written him since, and he has

good cause to be vexed; and now this wretched business. I cannot be absent now, for that poor boy's sake, or I would like to go away."

"Not you, Miles!" I said with energy; "I know you better. 'Twould be more like you to go and meet him and tell him about it yourself, before any distorted account reaches him."

But from this he shrank, and would only consent, after some hesitation, to write my father a very frank and manly letter, for which I hastened to bring candle, seal, and wax, and offered to ride a few miles to meet the coach and deliver.

Thursday proved a gray, dull-looking day, and my heart was not very light as I rode on this commission. I went much farther than I had expected before a turn in the high-road brought the coach into view, coming slowly on with, strange to see, my father up on the box, reins in hand. He recognized me immediately from afar off, and called out resonantly:

"Must I stand and deliver, Mr. Highwayman?"

"Stand and deliver your reason for driving," I answered. "Have you left Jupiter in town?"

"Oh, no," calmly; "he is lying down in the coach. He was sick when we left and grew worse on the road."

And, sure enough, there was Jupiter, comfortably propped among the cushions of the big coach, enjoying his misery with many groans where his master had installed him, while he himself mounted the box. I quickly tied my horse behind the coach and scrambled up beside my father to take the reins. After some unimportant talk on both sides I led up to my unpleasant story, which he heard without a word or change of countenance, and held out his hand at the end for

Miles' letter. This he read through slowly, taking his time, and only saying once, when in my impatience I touched up the horses:

"Softly, softly! Do not forget poor old Jupiter's rheumatism."

When he finished he folded and put it in a pocket, and then turned to me, with his own slow smile:

"The hand, indeed, is the hand of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob. Nay, then"—as I was about to disclaim—" *Quis tantus furor?* I will not say the voice, but the inspiration. Be that as it may, the foolish boy is not to be reproached, for his punishment has come."

Nor was there any severity, but great gentleness in his manner to Miles when he turned to greet him, after giving orders for Jupiter's removal to our hospital. And seeing how he brooded he did not utter one word of reproach, but gave him good hope that his Pollux would return and the charge against him be fully investigated to the establishment of his innocence. The first hint I had that the fugitive was anywhere above ground came from my Castor when undressing me that night. He shut the door and locked it, with exaggerated precaution closing the curtains, keeping me meanwhile waiting.

"What are you about? what is the matter with you?" I cried impatiently. "Come here at once and hand me the brush. Do you think any one is lurking round to carry us both off?"

He came close and whispered:

"Does yer tink, Mas' Anthony, dat 'tis safer fer dat boy dey's huntin' to clar outen de country, or des to lay low whar he's 'quainted wid de land?"

"See here, Castor," said I, lowering my own voice, but speaking impressively. "Don't tell me anything about your brother's hiding-place if you know it. But get word to him secretly, mind, that he had better trust himself to Mr. Miles if—mind, *if* he is innocent, as I believe. That reward offered in the paper will cause a more vigorous search for him."

"Dat's what I done tink; dat's what I done know," Castor said tremulously, fumbling with the clothes he was hanging up. "Dey's out agin from Oaklan' lookin' fer 'im, an' dat yaller gang-driver, Scipio, ober dere, dat hates him, at de head ob de crowd."

I don't know if he contrived to get my warning to his brother or not. If so, 'twas too late, for the pursuit ended tragically for Miles' poor servant the very next night. My brother, after some restless wandering about after supper, had decided to go over and inquire for Mrs. Northcote. My father and I stood on the piazza, I with a cigar, admiring the evening, still and beautiful, whose appearance I can never forget; for a phenomenon occurred in the heavens which was described in all the papers of the country on the following day. My father was murmuring, looking at the starlit sky, "*Pleiadas, Hyadas, clavamque Lycaonis Arcton,*" when an extraordinary meteor, with the appearance of a flying star, darted suddenly across the heavens from the south-east to the north-west. A stream of light accompanying appeared, to the eye at least, two or three hundred yards in length, of great breadth and dazzling brightness, which, illuminating the earth, drew attention to the meteor showing against the brighter light like a silver cord.

While we gazed in fascinated amazement, I heard the

avenue gate clang and some loud talking and exclaiming in the direction of the quarters. Cato came running toward the house and said breathlessly to my father:

"I jes year, massa, dat Scipio's gang done fin' Pollux in de ma'sh, an' some say dey shoot him."

I seized my hat from the antlers, vaulted over the rail, and sped down the avenue with Cato. The negro seemed as apprehensive as myself, and we ran side by side every step of the way toward Pollux's hiding-place, which he evidently knew. He turned off about a mile this side of Juba's hut and plunged straight into an impenetrable-looking thicket full of thorn-bushes and tangled vines, which threatened to trip us up at every moment; and afterward striking the edge of the swamp, 'twas only his thorough acquaintance with every foot of the land kept us from sinking waist-deep in the treacherous morass. Skirting it here and there, 'twas not long in reality, though it seemed so, before the light of torches and sound of voices came to us. They proceeded from a sort of island in the swamp, on which were standing some huge cypress trees. At the foot of one of these the torch-light showed a prostrate figure, lying with head propped on gray moss heaped together, the blood welling out from an ugly hole in the neck. The negroes, holding pine torches, moved to let us pass; one of them, Scipio, the sulky-looking mulatto driver at Oaklands, leaning on a gun and looking defiant. I saw 'twas our poor Pollux there, with life-blood flowing and eyes shut.

Cato whispered that he had been hiding out in the swamp ever since the trouble, making his sleeping-place in the hollow trunk of this huge tree, where Castor and the others brought him food and bedding.

Castor was there now, kneeling on the ground and weeping aloud, and I think 'twas scarce a minute before Miles and Northcote broke through the undergrowth into our midst; Miles' clustering locks matted on his damp brow and his face fixed and stern.

"Who did this?" he cried, standing over Pollux.

"Fo' God, Mas' Miles," said the mulatto Scipio, growing ashy with terror, "I didn't tink 'twas him! We was out coon-huntin' an' I tuk him fer wild-cat in de holler tree."

This was a lie, I knew, though he picked up and showed to any one who would listen how a piece of bark had been ingeniously fitted by the dying servant into the opening, thus preventing a sight of whatever made the dogs bark.

"He know 'twan' no wild-cat," muttered Cato. "He come out fer fin' him."

But only I heard Miles, having knelt beside the wounded man, calling: "Pollux! Pollux!" He opened his eyes at the familiar voice and tried to smile. Miles groaned. With his surgical knowledge he saw that the boy had but a few minutes to live.

He spoke in his ear, "I know that you did not put that stuff in the coffee, Pollux! Who did?"

"Put—'im—in, Mas' Miles—she gib—me money. Nebber know'd pizon—till doctor—git skeerd—an' run——" his voice failed him.

"Tell me that you forgive me, my poor boy, for letting you leave me."

Pollux made a last effort and muttered:

"Nuttin' to forgive, best o' massas, Mas' Miles," and with a long look at Castor, sobbing, and at Miles, he closed his eyes forever.

CHAPTER XIV.

IF Miles had actually killed his faithful boy with his own hand, he could scarcely have suffered more than he did at this time. He heard the mournful Methodist hymns the negroes wailed over the body down at the quarters, and stood over his grave, with face and manner of deep grief and self-reproach.

Rejecting with something like violence the idea of training any other of his slaves to fulfil his former servant's duties about his person, he would never after have a valet, accepting only the share of Castor's attentions which I pressed on him, though at first my boy's likeness to his dead twin brother caused him acute pain. And never while he lived could he be induced to touch a card again—except once—except once.

So far no light had been thrown on the occurrence at Oaklands; the circumstance of a gold-piece being found in Pollux's pocket, even in connection with his last broken words, being of no help. Though we were all most anxious to prove his innocence and on the alert for evidence of it, the subject, for Miles' sake, was tacitly avoided, and everything done to restore his cheerfulness. 'Twas of much assistance in this that the ladies returned shortly after, as all my father's thoughtful, pleasant talk, the colonel's company, and my silent sympathy were but clumsiness itself in comparison to woman's helpful tact in bridging over a painful time and situation.

We had music now constantly in the evenings, and Dorothy came over often. She impressed me as being a little cold with Miles, but very gentle and more quiet in manner and womanly, which became her wonderful beauty as every new mood did. We were all around the piano one evening, when Richard Northcote was announced. He wished to speak with Miles, with whom he was shut in the library for a time; then came in, and bowing, stood hat in hand.

"I have been telling Miles, Mr. Ashley," he said in his usual low tone, "of my deep regret at his loss, which only my mother's precarious state has prevented my coming over before to express. I believe the shooting was an accident; but even if 'twas mere clumsiness on Scipio's part, and though he is a valuable driver, I prefer to part with him, and shall send him down to Charleston this week to be sold, which is all I can do."

"'Tis too much if 'twas an accident, and a d—d sight too little if 'twas not!" growled the colonel in an undertone which I think Northcote heard, for his eyes gleamed.

"You have suffered in this matter too much to speak of amends," said my father with grave courtesy. "Will you not be seated?" motioning to a chair.

"Thank you, I have but a moment. My horse is at the door. Unless, indeed, I can be of service in riding beside Miss Winter's chariot on the way home." He had looked over to her before, as if to note the effect of his speech and manner.

"I am greatly obliged," said Dorothy, "but I am to remain with Nell to-night."

I looked at her, too, searchingly, perhaps, for though

'twas Eleanor's eyes which followed him out, hers met mine, so large and dark and defiant they made her face look strange, and she went to the piano and sang a French song he had taught her, and which he might have heard riding along the avenue.

My father returned to Washington for a few weeks now, and then retired from political life finally; the nullification excitement being allayed for the present by a species of compromise.

"The evil day of a final settlement of this matter is only deferred," he said to me. "If it be not now, yet it will come; but perhaps I shall have then gone to a country whose government is perfect."

The family moved on the approach of hot weather to a summer village situated higher up the country and in a hilly part, where the breezes blew healthfully over the pines. Most of the planters of our neighborhood moved there and remained there until the first frost brought them back to their plantations, forming here, during the summer, a little community whose habits were simple, intimate, and friendly in the extreme.

After a very early breakfast those who owned estates anywhere near would ride to visit them, otherwise to hunt perhaps, game being plentiful. Later, domestic and public affairs were discussed leisurely at post-office or village store. At one o'clock, dinner; and afterward, during the long, still, drowsy, golden afternoon, a siesta was taken so generally that a stranger coming in might have thought it the enchanted domain of the Sleeping Beauty—as it was of more than one. Then tea before the sun was down, and the piazzas became reception-rooms, where guests came and went from

house to house. The young girls in their white gowns formed many charming groups, which on the darkest nights were brightly illuminated, for in front of every house 'twas the custom to have a great yard-fire of light wood and pine straw constantly burning, around which the children laughed and sported. A servant with a lantern was all the escort fair visitors actually required when returning home at eleven o'clock, though gallantry usually provided others. For general amusement there were the assemblies and private card and dancing parties, the races, and, last of all, the Jockey Club ball.

For me this was a return, in habits and surroundings, to some of childhood's happiest hours. But I soon found 'twas with a man's heavier heart and more unquiet mind. My restlessness grew on me, and 'twas after one of the assemblies that I made up my mind to leave this scene of simple sylvan delights.

Dorothy had made a laughing bet with Miles in my presence—her gold smelling-bottle against I knew not what—that I would not ask her for the Boulanger. "For Anthony is not very polite to me," she said with pretended plaintiveness in which there was a curious inflection.

And 'twas my place to see the young beauty home afterward; and going about with a serenading party that night later, 'twas to me she had chosen to fling some deep-red roses she had worn in her dress when we sang under her window. And I thought of my father's words about battles where there was nothing to be won.

"What ails you, Anthony?" complained Cousin Betty when she found Castor packing my traps. "Why

should you go rushing about when 'tis so vastly pleasant here?"

I told her to betray the secret to no one, but I had been bitten once by a tarantula and could not keep still. Whereupon Eleanor opened her blue eyes, and Cousin Betty would have frowned but did not know how.

I roamed all over the mountains of West Virginia for some two or three months now, which doubtless benefited me in health, though Castor advanced as plea for his own return to home comforts my loss of flesh. However that might be, the earliest fall days found me travelling along the road to Woodhurst, where the others had preceded me. With something of my father's dislike of the hurry, heat, and noise and crowd of the novel mode of travelling by steam, I journeyed at my leisure, and partly by coach, partly on horseback, passed over hill and dale, letting the October beauty of earth and sky deliver to me the part of their message which was mine.

Riding homeward, the road led me past Oaklands, and bidding Castor go on, I turned in there to inquire for the invalid. Unlike Woodhurst, this place had two front gates, from which, instead of one great avenue, two went curving, and met at a large flower-bed just before the house. The quarters and all other plantation out-buildings were well to the rear and entirely out of sight on entering, and about the great house itself reigned that air of quiet and solitude natural to a place where the long-continued illness of the mistress had precluded all hospitable entertainment. So quiet was it and so still the air that as I slowly turned a curve in the avenue and came suddenly in

sight of two persons standing quite near me among the trees to the left, a few words fell distinctly on my ears.

"She is only playing with you, anyway," said a female voice, Mrs. Doubleday's, angrily, with a taunting laugh, "and he will find you out soon, and then—I reckon he has already. 'Twas his boy gave you that stuff."

"My dear Letitia," drawled Northcote, "don't excite yourself; 'tis not becoming to your style. The man you speak of is a gentleman and would take his revenge differently. But what could you know of a gentleman's habits?"

"What, indeed!" she cried, freeing herself forcibly from his half-contemptuous caress, "since 'tis you I have known best for a year or two. You promised me, you swore——" She caught her breath, then with an ominous change into a quiet tone: "If you keep on so—if you lie to me—you will have cause to repent, I tell you!"

He looked at her, frowning, then smiled again carelessly. I had checked my horse mechanically on first catching sight of them, but touched him now with the spur that I might hear no more. Before they saw me, however, a loud cry from the house called their attention, and Mrs. Doubleday ran swiftly through the shrubbery and disappeared through a lower door. He followed her at some distance, going hastily up the piazza steps, where his mother's maid stood wringing her hands and calling to him.

Mrs. Northcote was dying, they told me, and while I waited outside she breathed her last. I sent in a message of condolence. Mr. Northcote could not see

any one, so leaving offers of service, I rode on to Woodhurst.

The heaviness all this imposed lifted itself on nearing the far different atmosphere of home. A group of loving, welcoming faces met me at the gate of Woodhurst, Castor having heralded my coming. He now took my horse, and I walked up in the midst of a confused chorus of question and answer, joke and laughter, only Cousin Betty being a little absent in manner.

"I am monstrously concerned," she told me, "about Daddy Peter's pickaninny. The colonel's Primus gave him a box of Flugger's Pills to play with, and the child swallowed twenty before he was noticed."

"Good heavens!" I cried aghast; "he must die!"

"Oh, no," said Cousin Betty, "they get over worse things. But 'twas too foolish in old Primus. I wonder any of Peter's children live to grow up anyhow, their mother is so careless and unkind to them. One of the smallest fell in the mud the other day, and the others screamed to her: 'O mammy! Jimmy fall een de dut an' blin' he eye.' She went up, and as the crying child scrambled to his feet, gave him such a cuff as nearly sent him down again, saying fiercely: 'Who tole yer fer fall een de dut? who tole yer fer blin' yo' eye?' I have to watch them all the time to keep the children from being ill-treated."

She sighed and showed a little furrow in her brow. I could but think, as often before, how much responsibility and care the good soul bore, yet was ever cheerful and found time for social hours with family and friends.

'Twas no light task in those days to be mistress of a large plantation with as many slaves as ours. The

entire care of the women and children, the old and sick, fell on her, with supervision of house and kitchen, store-house, pantry, smoke-house, and hospital. And the supplies of food, clothing, and medicine to be ordered and given out. No grocery or bakery near to order from, either; but most articles of food made on the place, from hams and sausages to the most delicate cordials and confections. And without the sewing-machine of later days there was the clothing for two or three hundred people to be cut out by her and made by hand of seamstresses taught, superintended, and often helped actively. And outside all this and more provision for material comfort, to feel a constant anxiety for their spiritual welfare, and to be mistress, judge, friend, kindly and conscientious adviser to all these souls. I have often taken off my hat reverently, in spirit, to my cousin as she trotted briskly through the house, key-basket on arm, on one of her thousand missions; and I now took the liberty of kissing her plump little hand, at which she smiled again, well pleased.

She with the elders was grieved when, once in-doors, I told the news from Oaklands. They remembered Mrs. Northcote as a pretty young girl, but we, from her long seclusion, felt less acquainted with her than with the other heads of families in the neighborhood. All the country-side attended the funeral and sat afterward in the sombre, unfamiliar parlors while some wonderful Madeira was handed about. 'Twas here, I heard it whispered, that the deceased lady's will had not been found, which would be awkward for Richard Northcote, as, never having been legally adopted, the next of kin could then claim everything.

“She would never have done him such injustice as

fail to make a will," I said to my father in the coach going home, "after his being in actual authority over everything for so long."

"Oh, she certainly made one," said he. "Oldfield tells me he came from Charleston expressly to draw it up for her, and 'twas duly signed, witnessed, and sealed in his presence; and it made Richard Northcote sole heir. He offered to take charge of it and lock it in his safe for her, but she preferred to keep it, and now no one knows where 'twas hidden. He will stay a few days longer, until a more thorough search is made, though it has been carefully looked for already. If 'tis not found 'twill be a great misfortune to Richard Northcote, for if I judge him rightly he is not one to declare: *Ille digit potens sui lætusque, cui licet dixisse, in diem vixi*. However, he has still a chance."

"He is so clever," cried Miles, with unfailing loyalty, "that he can always make his way, and he has friends who will gladly help him."

Eleanor pressed his hand and looked her approval softly; but I could see that my father, like myself, suppressed comment, the time being unpropitious.

Some days after this, while the search was still going on at Oaklands, Tom Broadacre came up from Edisto to the Overstreets' for some shooting, and dined at our house one day. He seemed to remember not at all the untoward incident of his last visit, was in the highest spirits, and amused my father mightily by the absurd anecdotes he contributed to the general entertainment. Among other things he pleased him by avowing entire liberality in religious matters, which was always a great virtue with my father.

"Why, sir," said Tom, "those narrow views are

taught even in the nursery. There was the old man in Mother Goose who wouldn't say his prayers. They took him by the left leg, you remember, and threw him down the stairs."

"Upon my word," said my father, smiling, "that's a flagrant case of religious persecution which I had never thought of before."

There was, perhaps, an unusual amount of cheerful talk and laughter at this dinner, for Miles, just before entering the dining-room and holding Dorothy by the hand, had announced that she had at last fixed the wedding-day for Christmas Eve, at which there was great congratulating, and my brother looked, for the first time since Pollux's death, his own joyous, handsome, gallant self. Dorothy, in short-waisted gown of blue and silver, a silver comb holding high the frolicsome silky locks, was beautiful, as always. And if she seldom spoke 'twas not noticed, under cover of Tom Broadacre's rattling talk.

"Why do you not drink your wine, Anthony?" called Cousin Betty. "And fill Dorothy's glass. 'Twould do her good. I never saw either of you look so pale as to-day."

"Are you tired, Dorothy?" Miles asked anxiously.

"Not at all, not at all," she said with impatience. "Listen to Mr. Broadacre."

Tom had just produced a newspaper poem, cut out for our benefit, he declared, which was entitled:

NEW BOOTS.

These boots were never made for me,
They are too short, by half;
I want them long enough, d'ye see,
To cover up the calf.

Why, sir, said Last, with stifled laugh,
To alter them I'll try,
But if they cover all the calf,
They must be six feet high.

"He was the calf, d'ye see? That's the point. Six feet high. Ha! ha! ha! is not that good?"

"Are you sure that's the point?" asked my father.

"'Tis so subtly expressed one cannot be certain."

"Why, of course. Six feet high. It must be that. Ah, now I see you're making fun of me, Mr. Ashley. But 'tis a good joke."

My father, calling him an *ingenuus puer*, a mark of high favor, said to me afterward that he was pleased to note, under the young fellow's high spirits, a courteous deference to ladies and his elders. "I am told he is likewise most industrious," he continued, "and perhaps Sir Henry Saville was right when he said: 'The wits are mostly in Newgate; the steady, plodding men get the prizes.'"

'Twas when we were rising from table that a note was handed Nell, beside whom I stood.

"What is this?" she asked, puzzled, and I glanced at the beginning, over her shoulder:

"I delay not a moment in offering felicitations on the happy event which insures to a friend a day when he will obtain, as bride, one so fair, so devoted, so true and constant——"

I drew it quickly from her fingers and looked at the address. "'Tis for Miss Winter," I cried, handing it to her, who read and threw it into the fire, her back turned to us. But there was no reason to complain of

her lack of color or of gayety for the rest of the evening. The girl was in the maddest spirits, which, seconded by Tom Broadacre, involved all in a whirl of merriment. She sang, she played piano and flageolet; she insisted on all the most rollicking choruses and dances, where she took Tom, awkwardest of men, for her partner, and finally induced the colonel and Cousin Betty to dance, very slowly and stiffly, part of a minuet to her accompaniment; then played a favorite melody of my father's, a *chanson* of Handel's in G major which made his keen eyes grow dreamy and sad. After which she caught up the flageolet again and, personating the Pied Piper of Hamelin, stepped up and down the length of the waxed parlor floors in her little blue velvet and silver shoes, fire-light and candle-light sparkling on her shining hair, playing the sweetest, quaintest minor air, and followed, surely, by each one's eyes, at least. I wondered if one on our place, having the gift of fern-seed, would report this as well as the day's event. And oh, with what rapture my brother watched her every motion!

CHAPTER XV.

I HAD not forgotten the words overheard by me at Oaklands suggesting ideas on which I meant to act as soon as I had thought over the best method of doing so. 'Twould be useless to expect Mrs. Doubleday to criminate herself, and the poor boy who knew all was gone. If, on the other hand, the result of the attempt was a shock to her, as from her fainting on news of Northcote's danger it might be so, then he, still retaining influence over her, would not, for his own sake, permit her to tell what she did know. I might have consulted my father's keen judgment, anxious as he was to clear Pollux, but the one fact of which I felt certain was sure to arouse his just indignation and result either in his enlightening Doubleday or at least in his sending him and his wife away. And this, if the mystery was to be discovered, would be unadvisable for the present, certainly.

I saw her often at the cottage, going about the little duties in her self-contained manner. She stayed indoors much since Mrs. Northcote's death, was more listless and paler than formerly, and I was surprised once or twice to find her usually downcast eyes fixed on me with an expression something hard and wild. Once, too, I chanced to be looking in at our forge while the blacksmith was shoeing my horse, and heard one of the little negroes go up to the cottage and say:

"I gin him de papah, Mis' Doubleday, an' he say dey wan't no answer."

After a pause of a moment or two, "No, Pompey," said her voice, very low, but with a peculiar tone, "I guess it didn't need any. 'Twas 'bout Mis' Northcote's keys; and here's sevenpence for you." Shortly after this she went out, cloaked and hooded, as if for a walk, and the dogs went gambolling and barking about her as was their custom with any one belonging to the place.

'Twas an hour or so after this as I was riding along the road, thinking again of the clearing of Pollux's memory, a matter so dear to Miles, that the thought of old Juba came to me, and I wondered I had not remembered him in this connection before. 'Twas a vegetable poison had been administered to Northcote, the physician had declared, and who but he, in this neighborhood, had much knowledge of poisonous herbs, with, according to report, a will to use them? I turned my horse's head, without a very clear notion of what I intended, and went once again the dark and lonely way toward his hut. Once again, at the very point where I had formerly seen a pair of lovers, I now saw one figure, Mrs. Doubleday's, alone. She leaned against a tree, her back turned, looking in the opposite direction, her cloaked form scarcely distinguishable against the dark cypress foliage, the long waving streamers of Spanish moss hanging between us. As I looked, she seemed to make up her mind that she would wait no longer, and, gliding in and out of the undergrowth, was presently lost to view.

The old voodoo doctor was sitting in his door-way, where some rays of sunlight fell on him, mumbling toothlessly to himself.

"Well, Juba," I cried sharply, to attract his hearing, dull from age. He looked in every direction but the right one; but at last his small, clouded eyes, hardly discernible in the wrinkles, turned my way. "Let me in, Juba," I said, "I want to speak to you inside."

"Nobody here, nobody here, all 'fraid o' poor old Juba. Tink him debbil," with a weak chuckle.

I went up close to him so that the horse's skull grinned at me from inside.

"You know what you offered me once—a love-charm. I will take it now and here is money."

The old creature grinned horribly another ghastly smile at sight of the coin, though surely it could be of no use to any one in this dismal swamp, and rising difficultly and with groaning, tottered inside and I followed. Besides a wretched heap of pine-straw, with ragged coverlid, some bones, dried herbs, and the skull, there was nothing but the snake, indeed, which reared its flat head from the pine-straw. With infinite delay and uncouth muttering he found and handed me one of the bottles. Then, looking hard at him and still holding out a handful of money, I whispered:

"And, Juba, some of the other kind, you know, the kind you use for an enemy—the kind that Pollux used—you remember." Instantly his face fell into some semblance to the snake's, mere specks showing for eyes amid mottled, dirty-black coloring.

"Who Pollux? Nebber know Pollux. No odder stuff Juba hab." And he persisted in this until I lost patience and changed my tone to one of threatening. But this found the mummy equally impracticable, and I was forced to leave without the slightest clew and

followed by malignant looks from the miserable creature's dull eyes. But what proof, after all, had I to oppose to an obdurate denial? and 'twas merely presumption that he held the information I longed for. My visit to him was in every way fruitless, as the "love charm," on analysis, proved to be compounded of herbs, an excess of which caused headache, otherwise innocuous.

Doubleday went down to Charleston the next week on plantation business, and while he was away we were invited to a dinner-party at the Overstreets', given in honor of Miles and Dorothy. All went from our house before four o'clock, the hour mentioned, except myself, who sent an excuse, on the plea of extra work at the Roost which would detain me too late, but that I might come over in the evening. I was unable to do so, however, for before sunset the sky was obscured by thick dark violet and greenish clouds, which massing together in banks soon took on a uniform smoky tint and began to come down in a rainfall, pattering lightly and fitfully at first on roofs and tree-tops, but later in a steady, drenching down-pour which hid the landscape in a sheet of water. The wind, too, rose after dark and howled about the chimneys and house-corners, and slammed shutters violently, and drove the rain in gusts against window-frames. Castor and Cato waited on my solitary meal, and then, after shutting and barring up for the night, retired to the kitchen, whence I heard above the wind an occasional squeak of fiddle or sound of Castor's jigging or singing. With the swift forgetfulness of his race he had nearly recovered from his brother's death, and now came in fitful snatches his voice:

“ Oh, my Chloe Ann,
Oh, my Chloe Ann,
Come f’um de washin’ tub,
My own dear miss;
Oh, come wid a johnny-cake,
An’ come wid a hoe-cake,
Come to your true lub,
An’ come wid a kiss.”

The great log-fire shone brightly on the andirons and roared up the library chimney; the branched candlestick stood just in the right position to light my book; the book was “Hamlet;” my arm-chair deep and comfortable; the storm without made a pleasant accompaniment to my reading, the rain dashing against the shutters. Yet I found my thoughts wandering to the Overstreets’. I knew that in such weather no guest would be permitted to leave their spacious, comfortable roof until the morrow. Dorothy would be there. Would she be in white or in the blue and silver? She would sing, I knew. I could see her now at their harpsichord, with its high upright top, inlaid with ivory, for a background, candles on the brackets shining on her lovely dimpled arms, not hidden by their short puffed sleeves, moving up and down the yellow keys. It was not likely she would sing that song of Northcote’s—she only did that once out of defiance and would not meet my eye afterward. And she would not play the flageolet this evening, for that she only did at home and here, and if one disapproved he still felt that so a divinity, playing at shepherdess, would pipe and draw all hearts to her.

Then, bethinking myself that ’twas of little use to stay from the house that held her if I let a vision of her find me out here, I took up my book and fixed my

mind upon it. "How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable!" I read aloud, when I heard a knocking at the hall-door which must have been repeated before it reached me through the storm. I went out into the hall, and pushing back the bolts threw open the door, letting in both rain and a gust of wind, which made the candles in the hall-sconces flicker, and extinguished the one which I had set down on a chair.

"Great heavens! Mrs. Doubleday," I cried as I closed it after the figure without had stepped in. "Why do you come out in such weather? You must be drenched!" For indeed the moisture was shining on the long cloak and hood she wore. "Come in to the fire," I said, leading the way to the library.

"No," she said, "I am not very wet; I ran all the way," and added something confused about some medicine needed for one of the hands.

"If you mean for Peter," I said gravely, "'twas a pity you came out. Miss Sherwood sent it over to the quarters before she left."

She did not answer, but shrank back before the bright lights at the library-door, saying the rain from her dress would spoil the rugs, and she would go into the dining-room instead. I went before her, seized the tongs, and with some vigorous thrusts that sent sparks flying reanimated the fire, which was low, and then lighted the candles on the mantel-piece on either side of the portrait there; she standing quite still, only panting a little as though yet breathless from her haste. When I turned from the candles I was shocked to see her. She had been out in the rain long enough to be drenched, her thin gown adhering to her, the wet

dropping from her cloak to the floor. The wind had whipped some long locks of her flaxen hair about until they hung moistly and raggedly against her dark hood, which, drawn down on her forehead, made her face look startingly white. And her light-blue eyes had a strained, reckless look, while her thin lips, slightly parted, showed her teeth between. I pushed a great leather chair, always standing at the angle of that fireplace, toward her, but she merely shook her head, so I also stood at the opposite side of the hearth waiting for her to speak.

She began in a gasping voice, waiting now and then to take breath, "You'd hardly ha' believed that I could get so wet between the cottage and here, Mr. Ashley. What d'you think o' my havin' been over to Oaklands to-night?"

"I should think you were very imprudent," I said, looking seriously at her.

"In more ways than one, you think. Or maybe you think—for I know your pride—what is it to you," with a forced laugh, "where I go."

"You are mistaken, Mrs. Doubleday," I answered. "I think it a pity you should risk your health in such weather."

"Well, at any rate," she said wildly, "you are kinder than those who are not so proud. Not too proud to notice and flatter and coax even a girl like me, an' then keep you waitin' hours for a sight o' them or their message; an' it never comes till your heart dies in you, and then make it live again with a word, just to get you to send them news or serve them some way with other people. And at the end, what? You go through such a night as this to try, on your knees, for

the old kindness, an' get a drawlin' answer, 'If you were half as tired o' me as I am o' you you wouldn't be here, an' I trust 'tis for the last time. In any case I will not see you again, an' will now wish you good-night,' with a beautiful bow, oh! a beautiful bow," and she broke into a laugh not pleasant to hear.

"Mrs. Doubleday," said I, "I will not pretend not to understand you, but if you talk so freely your husband must hear of it, and then——"

"I know that you will never tell him an' I don't care if you do! I don't care for anything! Oh, my God! I wish I were dead!"

"You are very young; you have an honest, good, and steady husband," I said gently after a few moments' pause. "When you both leave Woodhurst, which must, I am afraid, be at once, you will, when far from here, after a while understand him better; and for his sake ask Heaven for something better than death."

"Yes, he is a good man, an' I am sorry about him," she said absently, as if scarcely listening; then, seeming to divine my wonder that she should have talked to me in this way, she said keenly: "There's something I can tell you that you'd ruther hear than 'bout me. An' 'twas that I came to talk 'bout, hearin' you was alone here to-night an' knowin' what you went to Juba for. Oh, I saw you down in the cypress swamp when I was waitin' for some one else. But I didn't let on, for 'twan't no use, an' I knew you'd get nothin' from the old nigger. Oh, I see you take an interest now, for I know you, Mr. Ashley, an' the store you set on your brother. I've watched you an' the rest too, many a time, when you never gave a thought to the overseer's wife, an' I've stood outside there, many an

evenin' "—with a gesture toward the piazza—"an' seen through the window another two than you an' me stand under this very picture that looks so like you, passin' notes an' talkin' a word or two secret——"

"Stop!" said I firmly. "I do not care to listen to you about affairs neither yours nor mine."

"'Twas my affair!" she cried fiercely, "an' oh, I know 'tis yours more'n you choose to tell. But I will not say one word against her, not if it vexes you; an' I reckon 'tis nothin' that a lady should be makin' eyes to one an' singin' to another, an' goin' to marry another——"

"I shall have to leave you, Mrs. Doubleday!"

"No, no, not another word, then. But I've seen you so kind to the horses an' dogs that I felt I must talk about myself; for oh, I've been so lonely, so lonely, an' wantin' company of my own age. You must think me a wretched creature, but you can't tell what 'twas to me here, with Francis older an' so quiet an' away so much, an' seein' young people comin' an' goin' an' laughin', an' me with no one to talk to but the hands. Your cousin was kind, an' his mother that's gone; an' then he came so soft-speakin' an' pleasant, an' now——" with another wild outbreak, "but he shall repent it! he shall repent it to the last day of his life!"

"Mrs. Doubleday," I said very earnestly, "if you can tell me anything that will clear away suspicion from the character of my brother's poor negro who was killed, both Mr. Miles Ashley and I will be deeply grateful to you and will be glad to help you any way we can."

She looked so completely exhausted here and unable

to speak another word that I again asked her to be seated while I went into the library for the keys, to get her a glass of wine. I had not taken notice of where Cæsar had placed the keys when going off, and it occupied several minutes to find them. When I returned to the dining-room she was seated in the arm-chair gazing fixedly into the fire, her hands folded on her knees. I brought from the sideboard a glass of wine, which she drank, and then I waited for her to speak.

“What should you say,” she commenced abruptly, “if a woman, seein’ the man she cared about beginnin’ to tire of her, an’ thinkin’ her eyes an’ hair he used to praise so much nothin’ but dirt compared to another woman’s that he hoped to get—yes, an’ her money, too, when he would cut out her sweetheart—an’ then hearin’ all the niggers talk about a wonderful voodoo that could make love-charms, to put a few drops in one’s drink an’ he would love the woman that ’twas made in her name forever, an’ better than the whole world; an’ then, not bein’ able to go for it herself, the lady she was nursin’ bein’ so sick, an’ not trustin’ any of the darkies on the place, she should hire a nigger that she knew, that was there for awhile, to get it for her? He was afraid to go, for Juba had said he’d cunjur him; but she gave him money an’ he got the stuff, an’ fer more money, when she told him what ’twas for, he put it in the coffee. An’ when it turned out to be poison, the boy ran away scared out of his senses, an’ when he was shot, the woman dared not tell. What should you say to that?”

“Oh, *vana superstitio!*” I groaned to myself, “which cost poor Pollux his life!” Then to her, “I should say

that for her there was always the risk of Juba's telling."

"He will never tell! An' all I can get from him is that Pollux must have taken a wrong bottle from his hut, as he keeps to kill rats with. He might ha' meant to get the boy into trouble, or he mightn't see well with his bleared old eyes; but nobody'll get nothin' from Juba."

"'Tis not too late for some slight reparation at least, Mrs. Doubleday. Let me write down your account and you can sign it," rising to get pen and paper.

"Stop one moment! Have you thought what this'll mean to me? I said I didn't care about that, an' I don't. But you must give me more time. I'll sign nothing to-night. Wait till to-morrow, when you'll hear from me. An' thank you for your patience in listening to me."

I saw 'twas useless insisting on the point just now, and I lighted her out. When another gust burst in with the opening of the hall-door I closed it again.

"I should have remembered how long you have been in wet garments. I will call one of the servants to shelter you with an umbrella on the way over."

She laughed recklessly. "I couldn't get much wetter," she cried. "Naught never comes to harm." And drawing the hood over her face, one long wet light tress streaming behind, she went out into the night and storm.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE wind had subsided next morning, but the rain still fell in hopeless, heavy-looking sheets that blotted out the landscape and hushed every sound of life outdoors with its own ceaseless drip and splash. The dismal, monotonous down-pour seemed to preclude, for evermore, all such possibilities as the joyous outburst of the mocking-bird, the chirp of the locust, the rustle of dry leaves under the squirrel's scurrying feet. And its dreary monochrome looked as though no sparkle of sunshine nor blue sky nor tender hue of flowers had ever been or could ever be enjoyed by a gray and drenched and miserable world.

For all that, or because of it, the sun rose the following dawn on a day heavenly fair as the Southern late autumn can boast of; newly-washed and fresh, the land rejoiced. Evergreen leaves sparkled in the sunlight thick with rain-drops. The gray moss banners waved in the cool breeze. From every hedge came the hum of insect or twitter of birds, and in the poultry-yard the noisy tribe crowed and clucked congratulations the while they shook out and dried their dank plumage.

I walked down the avenue after breakfast with some half-thought of seeing Mrs. Doubleday, from whom no word had come the previous day. There was no smoke rising from the cottage-chimney, but as I drew near

the door opened. To my surprise 'twas the overseer who looked out, and seeing me came down the steps.

"Why, Doubleday," said I, "how did you get here in all this deluge? You must have swum!"

"I got through in town sooner than I reckoned on, and started before the rain. Then I was obliged to put in at the Half-way House till 'twas over; and finished my journey here since daybreak."

"And are looking so troubled now over what damage the overflow in creeks and river will have done on the low plantations? Cheer up—it may not be so bad."

"There'll be damage enough, Mr. Anthony, especially in Sandy Bottom, though not so much as before the bank was built. But 'twas not that I was thinking of. 'Tis my wife, who isn't at home an' hasn't slept here. Will Miss Sherwood have sent her anywhere, do you reckon?"

"No," said I, at once; "she was here night before last. I spoke to her myself, and Miss Sherwood has not been home since. Perhaps she has gone for an early walk. Have you asked your cook?"

"They tell me she was away all yesterday, and her bed hasn't been slept in for two nights. Where could she go to in yesterday's rain?" His rugged face wore a look of anxiety. "Has she been sick, Mr. Ashley?"

"She was not sick when I saw her, and you are worrying yourself unduly. She will probably come in soon. If not, go yourself or send any of the hands you choose to inquire. I can give all necessary orders on the place to-day."

"Thank you, sir. I'll scold her well for going out in such weather," moving off with a hurry new to him, and I saw him no more that day.

I was much occupied all the forenoon, the swollen creeks having done some harm in the lower plantation and at Buzzard's Roost, but much less than would have happened before the construction of an embankment there, just finished after ten years' labor. When I was returning to dinner the party came back from the Overstreets', bringing Dorothy with them on her way home. Nothing would do Miles but she must come in and inspect the contents of a box just received from town. 'Twas of carved sandal-wood, and proved to contain many pairs of wonderful long Limerick gloves, in white and York tan, silver embroidered, ordered by him and made expressly for her. Then, of course, to see if they fitted, one pair must be tried on, to the admiration of Cousin Betty and Eleanor.

"How well they will become the fair hands of the fairest bride in the world," cried Miles with a lover's ardor. But the beautiful wearer of the gloves neither smiled nor blushed, but drew them off quickly, looking a little paler. He rode home with her after dinner, carrying the box with almost the care for anything belonging to her that his grandfather would have shown for the precious living charge riding on the pillion behind him.

"What is this I hear?" my father asked me now, looking troubled. "Doubleday has been to me for further leave of absence to seek his wife. She is away, no one knows where, nor has she sent or left any message for him. She is not likely to have friends in the neighborhood, do you think, not known to him or us? She seemed a quiet, good sort of girl, or—or—have you ever heard anything against her, Anthony?" Had there been any guilty responsibility resting on

my soul I do believe his keen dark eyes, though perfectly trustful, would have drawn forth a confession that instant. As it was I simply said:

"I do not know, sir, where she is or why she is not at home. I saw her evening before last, when she had been out in the storm and was dripping wet. I advised her to seek dry clothing and a fire, and have not seen her since. Some of the servants would be more likely to have news of her."

"He seems to have made thorough inquiry all over the place; even going to that old man Juba, whom, it appears, she is not afraid to visit. Ah, well," in a lighter tone, "she will doubtless turn up in a day or two to laugh at him for his pains. Perhaps she has made a little journey somewhere, being tired of the loneliness and monotony during his absence. *Varium et mutabile*, you know, and I have sometimes thought we might do more for the poor thing." He had been invariably kind and interested in her. "If she had been just a thought more educated, she might have helped teach the negroes, but 'twas only lately she taught herself to write, as I discovered accidentally. And she is not very industrious, have you remarked? 'Tis a pity Doubleday thought of marrying, a man with his talent for work, and I hate to see a good fellow harassed. But she will be back all right."

In my secret soul I inclined by no means to his optimistic view, remembering the reckless excitement of the overseer's wife at our last interview was undoubtedly that of a desperate woman, and who could say to what it might impel her? 'Twas in my mind to tell my father this, but I deferred the disclosure which for Miles and Pollux's sake must ultimately be

made. Whether the delay was ill-judged and instrumental in the after tragedy, or simply part of the chain of circumstances which we elect to call fate, I cannot say. Suffice it that at that time, with the consciousness of Northcote being an enemy, it seemed ungenerous to injure a man suffering at the moment from fortune's spite. Also, 'twas my idea that Mrs. Double-day might still, from a safe distance, furnish the proof of a confession of which I had no witness. And in that expectation I waited from day to day.

The following morning brought a few lines from the overseer, still anxious, but with a hopeful note, and written while waiting at a tavern for his horse to be fed. She had been seen on foot, alone, going in the direction of the High Hills, and he, being mounted, must speedily overtake her. His theory of her wandering was that she was suffering from a feverish attack, her manner having been reported by the person meeting her as confused and singular. After this we heard no more for some days.

The date appointed for Miles' wedding drawing near, Dorothy was to go down to Charleston shortly with her mother for some final important shopping. Bandboxes and bundles were already arriving in great quantities and being left at wrong places and causing infinite searching and vexation, as happens sometimes even with the perfect mail system of later days. The conversation of the elder ladies consisted about this time mainly of allusions to "taffeta," "sarsnet," "sweet sprigged muslin," "satin turc," "silver lace," "tortoise-shell combs," "Circassian scarves," "Smyrna crape sashes," "gigot sleeves," "Leghorn hats," "Grecian drapery," and the like. Even little Eleanor,

with her taste for romantic sentiment, awakened to a very lively interest in pearl pins and lace veils. The one most nearly concerned in these preparations was the most indifferent, showing something like a disdainful impatience when they were talked of in her presence. Perhaps because she knew that her fairness depended in no wise on these gauds. Perhaps because, as Cousin Betty knowingly remarked: "She was losing her flightiness and settling down into vastly becoming seriousness." However it might be, I had small opportunity of judging, being out-doors most of my time attending to Doubleday's work, and leaving visitors to Miles, who looked handsomer every day in his unconcealed happiness.

He had gone over to Fairview one afternoon, when immediately after our avenue gate opened again to admit the colonel, who came slowly through on his bony mule. He entered the library, paid his compliments to the ladies, chatted a few moments, then said to my father:

"By the way, Ashley, there's a tree of yours needs cutting down, a big oak growing against one side of a fence and threatening to push it over, a crooked, ugly fellow; come out and let me show it to you."

I took the privilege of following the old gentleman, looking serious, and the black ribbon tying back his hair being considerably awry, a sure sign of disquiet with him. When we were well away from the house he stopped short in some inconsequential remarks with a sudden:

"This is a sad piece of news my Primus brings me. Didn't like to tell you in the house before the ladies. I know what delicate nerves they have, and

how they go off fainting and screaming at the least shock."

I could not forbear a smile at the thought of sturdy little Cousin Betty tumbling backward in a swoon when the colonel brought forth his piece of news.

"What is the trouble, colonel?" asked my father.

"Well, you see, I sent Primus off to Flintburg with a hog and some chickens for sale; and he went a bit of the way across the hill country, and came to a farmhouse where poor Doubleday chanced to be, and—and in the market-town—surely I have the note somewhere"—fumbling in his many pockets.

My father courteously restrained his impatience until at last the colonel produced a crumpled bit of paper, then went through the lengthy process necessary to find and mount upon his nose his huge silver-bowed spectacles.

"'Colonel Milton, Dear Sir,'" he began, holding it out at arm's-length, and then slowly, with something like moisture dimming his glasses—"A d—d cramped piece of penmanship as ever I saw in my life;" falling unconsciously into the words of the only play he knew by heart.

"Give it to me, colonel!" I cried, unable with the haste of a younger, less ceremonious generation to emulate my father's self-restraint.

"Take it, then, my dear boy," handing the note, which ran:

"*Col. Milton—*

"HONORED SIR: When your boy gives you this, will you please tell Mr. Ashley that I have found my poor wife, to my sorrow? Her dead body, drowned in the

river near, was brought to me last night. The late rains having swollen the streams, 'tis supposed that trying to cross on a broken bridge she slipped in. God knows, but I am going to carry her back to her own town, and will write to Mr. Ashley from there.

"With respects to him and his family, who were always kind to my poor girl, I am, sir,

"Your most obedient, humble servant,

"FRANCIS DOUBLEDAY."

"Primus saw the unfortunate woman," said the colonel huskily, "and talks till I make him hold his d—d tongue of her white face and long wet hair."

My father and I looked at each other in a shocked silence. Then I made up my mind, having lost all hope of proof, to tell what I knew. And I related every particular of the dead woman's last interview with me to the two elder men, who listened with the closest attention. At the end the colonel, with a great oath, swore that he always thought Dick Northcote inclined to evil.

"A man who will ridicule the Father of his Country is capable of anything."

"You might have told me sooner, Anthony," said my father with a touch of reproach, "and I should have excluded him from my house. Here is another life lost, besides poor Pollux, and Doubleday wretched."

"I had no proof, sir, until recently, and then only her statement without witness. She promised me written evidence which never came. And that you should exclude from your house on mere suspicion one I disliked, just when he was in case of being disinherited and ruined, especially in view of Miles' previ-

ous intimacy, was what I did not desire the countryside should have a chance to misinterpret. There was a likelihood that he would soon leave for other reasons, and finally."

"'Tis now a certainty," said the colonel. "Primus tells me the time is out for finding of the will, and the legal heir will soon take possession."

"'Twill be a happy riddance," said my father seriously. "I am glad my old friend did not live to think so too of his adopted son. I trust the next heir will have no foreign fascinations to teach the youth of St. Stephen's parish."

"Wrong-doing," I ventured, "is of no time or place, sir."

"True, true," agreed the colonel, "but about Juba, now"—pushing his glasses up on top of his head and rumpling his hair in his perplexity—"I'm afraid we can do nothing with him, he is so old and half-crazy, I think."

"I have tried him," said I, "and 'tis useless. I fear 'tis altogether hopeless—an attempt to clear Pollux."

"I fear so," said my father. "After Northcote leaves the parish you will of course tell Miles. Beyond that, any agitation of the matter could only cause further disturbance, and we had better, colonel, for poor Doubleday's sake, imitate Anthony's silence."

CHAPTER XVII.

JUST at this point the sound of horses' feet made us turn, to see my brother and Northcote riding in together. By ill-fortune, Miles, spending the evening at his sweetheart's, there encountered Northcote, who came to pay a farewell call and then proposed accompanying Miles as far as Woodhurst that he might make his adieux to our family also.

"There's that d—d scoundrel," growled the colonel, "and grinning like a Cheshire cat, too, when he must have heard. Well, I'll leave you," calling one of the boys to bring round Hurrah, which he mounted feebly. He did something of an injustice when he characterized as a grin the faint and forced smile with which Northcote was listening to Miles, and there could be no doubt that the long strain of suspense as to his fortune had given a worn look to features always a trifle sharp. The colonel passed him hastily. "Good-night, Miles—O Mr. Northcote, it's you."

"'Tis I myself, in the flesh, Colonel Milton," he rejoined sarcastically, looking with unconcealed disdain after the colonel's retreating form. "Not having the recipe of fern-seed, I do not ride invisible. Good-evening, Mr. Ashley."

"Good-evening, sir," replied my father, with a formality that to me, who knew, seemed freezing. He presently withdrew on some pretext, and sending word

that he was indisposed, absented himself from the tea-table. The guest, politely expressing his regret, evidently attached no significance to this withdrawal.

He was in his most brilliant conversational vein, with a touch of cynicism which his impending enforced exile seemed to excuse. Cousin Betty, and even more, our dear Nell, gave him all their sympathy with voice and eyes, all the more earnestly that he made no weak complaints of his hard fate.

"You know that I leave my childhood's home and friends to-morrow, 'Lord of my presence and no land beside,' " he had simply said at first and alluded no further to the blow. I must needs confess, even now, that the man was a fascinating talker when he chose. The women listened charmed. Miles, between whom and himself had sprung up lately a sort of constraint, owing, perhaps, to his having thrown off disguise in the recklessness born of imminent ruin, warmed to him as he spoke. Even I, with all my aversion to sitting at table with him, must have enjoyed his talk but for a vision that came before my sight and would not down of a dead woman with white face and long wet hair. I followed grimly enough when music was proposed, and Nell led the way across the hall into the parlor. Though in mourning, he said, and singing nowhere else, he could not refuse one or two songs for her—this last evening.

"Not the very last! You will come back some time," she said, a tremor in her gentle voice.

"Oh, certainly, you will come back!" cried Cousin Betty, snuffing a candle with such vigor that she snuffed it out. "Of course you will come back vastly fine and prosperous, your fortune made in New York.

I was there once for a month and everybody was excessively rich. Except, indeed," with a lowering of tone, "a few that were very poor. I did see in the papers that a man starved to death in a garret not far from our hotel, and a beggar died in the street from cold. But"—recovering spirit—"most of them are just rushing about from morning to night, making money."

I would have liked to ask ironically if 'twas thoughts of the unfortunate minority of Manhattan that gave that wonderful pathetic tone to his voice, or possibly some unpleasant memories of his own. He sang:

"Oh, Richard, oh, mon roi,
L'univers t' abandonne,"

then a little Norman "Adieu," and arose from the piano with an effect of studied gayety to say:

"I shall make you as glad to get rid of me as I am sorry to go."

"You will be back here this time next year, singing for us," said Cousin Betty with conviction.

"I hope so," chimed in Eleanor with soft earnestness.

"In that, then," thought I, looking at her, "I write a never," but aloud, "Has Nell had unusual fatigue to-day, Cousin Betty, or why does she look so tired?"

She took alarm at once, as I knew she would, discovered the pallor I had invented, and insisted on Nell's retirement. Miles now came in from the stable, where he and Cæsar with a lantern had been examining a dog's wounded foot.

"The gentlemen will be glad to have a little talk and smoke now without us," quoth Cousin Betty, and disregarding Eleanor's protests and with more fare-

well prediction of success for Northcote, she went away, sweeping Nell, slender and straitly-gowned, in the wake of her ample draperies. We now went into the dining-room and around the fire-place lit cigars.

Watching Northcote stretched comfortably in my father's chair, eyes fixed on the curling smoke of his cigar, I could not resist the temptation of breaking in abruptly on some unprofitable chat between him and Miles with a sudden: "I suppose you have both heard the painful news that has come to us?"

They looked inquiringly at me.

"The ladies of our family know nothing of it yet. But we have information from Doubleday himself that his wife is dead—drowned in Mingo Creek."

"Good God!" cried Miles, honestly shocked, "what a distressing thing! Poor young woman. How did it happen? What made her go off?"

"Distressing indeed," repeated Northcote seriously. But I divined from his manner that he knew of it before, doubtless through some of his negroes. And that he knew it with sufficient calmness, if not actual relief, to be able to pay brilliant and effective farewell calls.

"Poor Doubleday!" Miles went on, "a worthy good fellow, if ever there was one. And she seemed a civil, obliging sort of girl. Nice-looking, too, wasn't she?"

"I hardly noticed," said Northcote; "she was about my mother a good deal at the last. Rather showy in dress for her station, perhaps, but quite useful." He returned my steady look with one of cool impassiveness.

"Her husband thinks," said I, answering Miles, "that she may have wandered from her home while she was

light-headed with fever. She was out in all that storm, and finally, the stream being much swollen, either fell in or threw herself from a broken bridge."

"She would hardly do that," said Northcote tranquilly, taking up the tongs to get a fresh light, "being so comfortable here; she was no doubt delirious."

"She was entirely rational when she spoke to me the day she went away."

"Poor thing! poor thing!" said Miles. In his disturbance he found fault with his cigar and threw it behind the logs, then rose to seek a favorite pipe. This filled and lighted he remained standing, leaning his elbow on the mantel under the Landgrave's picture, in much the same attitude in which I had confronted Dorothy the first night she came to Woodhurst after my return. And by a coincidence his hand too, falling idly behind the frame of the portrait, struck a package of rustling paper.

"Why, what is this?" he cried, drawing it forth from the stout bands which crossed each other behind the picture.

I think Northcote and I leaped to the same conclusion—O Dorothy, Dorothy, that such was possible! He leaned forward, his eyes glowing, the cigar held in his fingers, while my brother opened the paper, then sank back into his chair in mocking triumph, with an open, insolent smile and words which came to me from between his teeth, as "*Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin.*" I could not be sure but the mere suspicion made me for the moment more of a tiger than a man, and as though I must strike him, even on our hearth. With hand clinched I had made an involuntary step forward, when Miles' words arrested me:

"What is this?" he said in great surprise. "'Tis signed 'Letitia Doubleday.' But how came it here and what is it all about!"

"Read it," said I, noting Northcote's smile change to an instant gravity, touched in spite of him with painful suspense. Dolly's foolish coquetry in the past was not then to be dragged to light at this inopportune moment, and my heart was easier.

"It begins," said Miles:

"'To any one who may find this. 'Tis to be read and published for justice's sake. I reckon I'll then be out o' the way of its harmin' me, but it doesn't matter, for nothin' could be worse than my life is to me now. I solemnly declare that the stuff as maid Mr. Richard Northcot sick, an' the doctor said was pison, came from old Juba. He sole it to me fer a love charm, an' said it wud bring back any one's fancy if it had left you, an' maik them love you all their lives, which he promised an' then despised an' laffed at me. An' maybe he'll understan' why I chuse to hide this in the place where it'll be found—I meane Richard Northcot—not the furst intrustin' note as has come to him from there, an' won't be the last, praps.

"'So I gave Polux money to put it in his coffy an' it didn't do no good. But Polux was shot, an' Juba is crazy, an' I may as well tell the truth now.

"'One thing I want Mr. Northcot to know very partickler is, if his mother did make a will—an' there's menny has seen it, he'll not find it, never. This is every word true.

LETITIA DOUBLEDAY.'"

In my hurrying thoughts I settled it that she proba-

bly put the package behind the picture the little while I was out of the room seeking the sideboard key. She must then have come prepared with this written confession, and 'twas with some revengeful idea of a fitting retribution that she had secreted it where she did, with a premonition, or intention rather, that it should not be found until after her death. Was there more to read? for it seemed as though Miles still held some sheets of paper. Perhaps not, for he only said very gravely, tendering the blotted note to Northcote:

“This, at least, clears my poor boy who was so carelessly shot.”

“You forget that I was also something of a sufferer in the matter,” cried Northcote, “though I presume, Mr. Ashley, that I could hardly expect that a friend’s life would have the same value in your eyes as that of your negro.”

The hand with which he took the paper was quite firm, but his color changed as he looked over it to crimson, then back again to white. He read the words about his mother’s will once again aloud, and exclaimed violently, “What does *that* mean?” Then looking from one to the other of us, his whole face lost in one black frown, said: “How am I to know that this—if not a forgery, 'twas a singular place for it to be, and one who hides can find—is not a conspiracy? I am quite aware of the friendly feeling entertained for me by one of the gentlemen present, and have heard somewhat of secret interviews on stormy nights. I shall scarcely have time to sift this business, as I leave to-morrow, so may as well concede that this spelling seems familiar,” with a sneer, “and is possi-

bly the raving of a delirious woman. My lawyer will try and discover if there is any connection between the allusion to the loss of a will and the place this was concealed. And as it is late, I will now bid you good-night."

"No, by God!" said I, with my back against the door. I spoke almost in a whisper, but it must have sounded queer, for he looked at me strangely. "You will not leave us, Mr. Northcote, until we clearly understand what you mean. I can comprehend your rage that your pleasant vices have turned to whips to scourge you from your inheritance, but not how it concerns us. If your words refer in any way to me, I will only say——"

"One moment, Anthony," Miles interposed. He had turned aside while we were talking for several instants, and as he now faced me he was curiously pale and spoke in a commanding, though quiet tone quite new to him. "I am the elder, my dear brother, which you will admit I seldom insist on, and am mostly glad and proud to have you take the lead; but this once you will allow me. Mr. Northcote is our guest, and you will scarcely resent, at this time and under my father's roof, words which are doubtless without meaning and caused by some natural heat of disappointment." He paused and looked at Northcote, whose sneering smile with which he was prepared to answer me faded into a certain gravity.

"Without meaning, certainly," said he carelessly, "but you must allow for the irritability of a penniless, landless unfortunate."

"That is enough," said Miles. "Anthony, you will please let me show Mr. Northcote out."

Under the dominion of this novel air of authority he wore I mechanically moved aside for them to pass out, receiving an ironical bow from Northcote which set my blood once more aflame. They stood on the piazza steps while horses were brought round; then Miles came back to say:

“Anthony, as 'tis Northcote's last night here, I will ride as far as The George with him.” He laid an affectionate hand on my shoulder—I can see him now, my Miles, standing in his grand height, so handsome and kind. “Do not sit up for me, my dear fellow, I may be late.”

I went to bed, vexed that he should, after this disclosure, continue on friendly terms with Northcote. The latter's change of tone was comprehensible enough, I thought scornfully, if a farewell game of *écarté* would furnish a handsome sum to begin anew with.

'Twas early night yet when they started, and just outside the gate they chanced to meet Henry Overstreet, riding past on his way to The George too. So the talk was general on the road, and they entered the tavern laughing together. After a while Miles challenged Northcote to a game of *écarté*, and as they had often done before, asked the landlord for a room, who sent the waiter to light it for them. Cards were placed on a table and a bottle of wine, and they sat down to their game. Something was wrong with the candles, or the fire did not burn well, for the waiter was obliged to return several times, and said afterward the players seemed absorbed in their game. But after a while Miles, speaking more sharply than was his wont to inferiors, who always adored him, told him not to come back, that he disturbed them.

Shortly after the colonel, finishing his dominoes and preparing for home, remembered some message for my father which Miles might carry, and went along the passage to knock on the closed door of the small card-room. Though the voices within were not raised high, his knock, repeated once or twice, was unheard and he opened the door.

Candles were burning on the table and the cards lay there scattered, but the two men stood facing each other with angry brows, and Miles held some open papers in his hand.

"You will not deny your own handwriting, I presume, sir," the colonel heard my brother say, and Northcote answered coolly with a shrug:

"I am proud to acknowledge both my own letters and the dainty replies with which I was favored."

The old man would have retreated, seeing this was a personal difficulty, but Miles perceiving him called: "Come in, Colonel Milton, if you please, and close the door. I am glad, sir, to have you as a witness that I consider Mr. Northcote to have been guilty of conduct basely dishonorable and unfit for a gentleman."

"You understand, sir, that there can be but one answer to that," said Northcote, his face livid, "and as my time is limited, the quicker the better."

"At your service, sir," said Miles calmly. The waiter was rung for and sent to request the presence of two friends from the Long Room. And as any reconciliation of the dispute was declared by both principals impossible, 'twas supposed to be a quarrel over the cards. All arrangements were made at once. Nothing could have been suspected in the Long Room, as Miles and the others, too, lingered on their way

through the group for a joke or a laugh or a bit of jesting advice to this or that player.

"My heart was heavy," said the colonel to me afterward, his long hands trembling on his stick, and the rare tear of old age on his withered cheek, "but what could I do, what could I do, Anthony? I had been in a thousand quarrels myself, and acted, I hope, like a man. But Miles moved and spoke as I had never seen him, and there was the hate of a devil in that cursed Northcote's face."

I seemed to myself to have just fallen asleep that night when I was awakened by a clatter of andirons, and opened my eyes to see Castor making up my fire with much unusual noise.

"What in thunder do you mean by coming in at this hour?" said I irritated, for the dawn had scarcely yet brightened the far east. He dropped the tongs and came up to the bedside with a package.

"I tink you like fer see dis bundle wha' jes done come." I opened the paste-board box, and 'twas a white satin waist-coat and high stock for Miles, made from a piece of the bride-elect's dress, sent for that purpose to Jehu Jones, London tailor on Longitude Lane. I was surprised, against all resolve, into swift displeasure at the sight.

"Take it into Mr. Miles' room, you rascal. What have I to do with his things?" I cried.

"Mas' Miles done gone out," said Castor.

"At this hour!" I exclaimed, for he was a notoriously late riser. And only then perceived the half-fearful, half-pleased excitement on Castor's dusky face.

"He done been gone long time," said he. "Mas'

Henry Overstreet came fer him, an' dey carry off de box wid de jew'lin pistols."

With a hasty word for his tardiness in telling me, I sprang out of bed and into my clothes. I would not wait for a horse to be saddled, but mounted and rode him bareback, as my brother and I had so often done in childhood. I knew well the clearing among the pines across the river where hostile encounters in our neighborhood mostly took place, and over which the sun was now rising and gilding the tree-tops, and I urged my horse along the road in that direction. But I was not more than half-way when from out the shade of the trees I met a group moving slowly toward me.

Negroes carried a sort of litter, others led horses, and at one side walked Henry Overstreet and Dr. Houston. The former gave a violent start on seeing me and stepped forward to check me. But I had perceived that the motionless figure extended on the litter was of unusual length, and a wave of curling blond hair, blown by the morning breeze, showed outside the covering cloak. A horrible pang of apprehension went through me. I fell from my horse and ran toward it. And 'twas my dear Miles lying cold and dead.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT so, in one instant, the stalwart frame, the handsome kind presence, all that he was, were shut away from us forever, seemed so monstrously impossible that I went now silently moving through the scenes of the next few days as in some hideous phantasmagoria. My father's pale set face, the women's sobs, our friends' shocked sympathy, the negroes' loud groans and lamentations, come to me now as if 'twere yesterday that we had laid him in the family burying-ground on our own place. 'Twas then but a small part of the torture humanity must undergo at such times of bitterness.

The women took sad comfort after awhile in dwelling fondly on the words, tones, looks, all of which their tenderness connected with him whom they would no more see, he being done to death. But for me and for my father too, I know such recalling of the lost was being stretched upon the rack. As time goes on and we approach the farther confines of this world, awaiting instantly our summons hence, we seem so near to joining our beloved dead that we can speak calmly of them, as I do now. But there were years and years when my Miles' name uttered in my hearing was like the turning of steel in some open wound.

I went through my part, however, receiving and answering innumerable notes and letters of condolence,

and seeing visitors from all parts of the country-side who came to express their sympathy. Among these came the poor old colonel, all bowed and trembling from the shock. He sat in the darkened parlor leaning on his stick, and after trying vainly once or twice to speak, said at last:

"He came in to me a moment on the way, Anthony. I was in bed. I asked if nothing could be done to reconcile matters, but he said no, and I knew from his face that 'twas final. What could I say? I am a soldier, and when I was younger would have been with him." And then, "I'm told that when the word was given the villain's pistol caught in the lapel of his coat, and Miles, foregoing his advantage, lowered his own and waited his readiness. And after that—after that, by God! Northcote smiled, took deliberate aim, and—and—curse him!"

But the old man's spirit was weakened by this blow. He loved us both as his own children, and during his few remaining years was never himself again. He had forgotten one of the principal objects of his coming, and 'twas only after I had helped him on his mule that he remembered it. Then he drew out a package from his pocket.

"Oh, I was to give you this, Anthony, in case he fell. 'Twas for that he came to me so early. He would not leave it in his bedchamber or the servants might have found it before he wished."

I thanked him mechanically. I wanted to be alone with my message from the dead. It ran so:

"MY DEAR ANTHONY:—If you ever read this 'twill be because I can never speak to you again. And the

pain that leaving you, my dear brother, would be to me is what I dare not dwell on, for I must act now as becomes an Ashley and a gentleman.

"When you would have quarrelled with Northcote 'twas in our father's house, and I used that obstacle to check you. But 'twas not all my reason, and you must forgive me for insisting on my place as elder, which you know I had never cared about, but was glad to have you settle other matters, who are so clever.

"When I found by accident that writing of Mrs. Doubleday's behind the picture, there was some more wrapped in a sheet of blank paper and addressed to me. I glanced over it while you two were speaking, and there were notes in a hand I knew, but not to me—more than one, and some from Richard Northcote in reply. So I had cause of quarrel—with so close and confidential a friend—which you could not have, but not there and then, and I rode out with him.

"The people at the tavern, even the colonel, think the dispute was over cards. But I would not have you or my father believe me so weak, having given up play since poor Pollux' death, as you both know. Tell him only that 'twas another matter; and you will burn the papers after reading them yourself. I have written Dorothy—understand that she is in no wise to blame—but the underhand dealing of a trusted friend I cannot forgive. Nor his words about it.

"If I fall, you will make a better master of Woodhurst than I ever could. Tell my father I said so, with my love. And to all my dear people, and you above all, my beloved Anthony.

"Your loving brother,

"MILES ASHLEY."

The notes within on their sheets of foreign paper were letters of Northcote, written while Dorothy was in Charleston, and the answers were probably those whose loss he raged about at the tavern, and which Mrs. Doubleday must have secured when an inmate of Oaklands. She, no doubt, had found means to bribe the messenger who went to meet the mail-coach, and inclosing them with her own statement, had trusted to the precise accident which had discovered them for a supplementary posthumous vengeance, after destroying the stolen will. A vengeance, alas! whose heaviest stroke had turned aside to fall upon a manly heart which held no thought of wrong to any one.

Northcote's tone, respectful enough at first, grew more daring in the two last, and thinly veiled under a pretence of gallantry audacious advances but weakly discouraged by a spoiled beauty. The fanciful address to "Beauteous Myrtille" of the first letter became "Lovely Dorothy," and then "adored Dolly," which was indeed rebuked, but in his own proper name and not that of "Lucius" as at first. And in the last one he had ventured plainly to tell her that she was throwing herself away on a man of inferior parts and no spirit, when an adorer worthy of her was dying to carry her off to realms of enchantment, where a free forgiveness would follow them. I had reason to believe that what was no worse than foolish coquetry on her part had been past for some time, to his bitter chagrin. But 'twas easy to imagine the effect of the disclosure of these passages on one quite unsuspecting, who saw himself described as too supine to be a fit mate for so beautiful and spirited a goddess, and too much a laggard in love to be even capable of jealousy.

For 'twas thus Northcote chose to misrepresent the noble simplicity whose high sense of honor forbade distrust.

When all proper requirements were fulfilled, all duties paid, and the household had resumed its usual mechanical routine, I prepared for a journey and went to bid farewell to my father. He placed his hands on my shoulders, looked long and earnestly into my eyes, then murmured through lips almost closed: "We are told—we are told—to forgive." I shook my head, meeting his look with one as steady.

"Go, then, go," said he, taking his hands away. "I hang no calf-skin on my own son's limbs. Only"—with a close embrace—"come back to me, come back to me."

Before I started I had had a note from Northcote in Richmond, in reply to one of mine, which I think may have pierced through his shell of studied indifference. He answered:

"SIR:—I shall be happy to meet you when and where our seconds may appoint. 'Tis an honor I have long desired, having hated you from childhood, which, being so very clever, you have known, no doubt, especially since I found that notes which used to fly to me, almost under your brother's eyes, ceased to come from the very first night of your return to Woodhurst. It seems a pity that your brother, having been so long blind, should at the last have been so hasty; otherwise he might have found cause to direct his suspicions against some one else than, sir,

"Your very obliged, humble servant,

"RICHARD NORTHCOTE."

'Twas a week after that I saw once more his false, detested face at twenty paces from me, in an open field close by the James River. It wore its usual smile, but looked to me ill at ease, with all its bravado, beneath my gaze. 'Twas my first and only duel, but standing there facing my enemy, I seemed to be doing nothing unusual. 'Twas as though all my life had been leading up to this point, and I were merely acting in a scene prefigured in frequent dream. Beyond this I was chiefly conscious of the delicious freshness of the morning, of the beauty of the woods sloping down to the water-side, and mechanically of the awkwardness in handling the pistols of one of the seconds. Northcote fired first on the word, but with something of hurry, perhaps, for the ball only grazed my coat-sleeve; then, taking aim, I fired, and he staggered backward a pace or two and fell. The others ran up and surrounded him, and I waited.

"The surgeon says 'tis most likely a fatal wound," said Broadacre, coming back. "But there is still a breath of life in him. We must be going, Anthony."

We left for home immediately, and there I learned from time to time of the raging fever and after-prostration from his wound which kept my enemy in bed for three months, of the certainty of permanent lameness if his life was saved, of his narrow escape and final recovery, for which I was at that time sorry, for I had meant to kill him.

In these calmer, cooler years, it may seem to me better that his death, though deserved, should not lie at my door; but for a great part of my life the only argument of practical force with me against a custom to which I was born and bred was that the lightning of this ordeal was as likely to strike the avenger as

the offender. A survival of the old "judgment of God," it might too often be known, as a modern writer says all judgments are, by their falling on the wrong person. However, I need not here obtrude an individual opinion on a generation which has attained a point of view clearer, juster, more dispassionate, no doubt.

Even then I could not be insensible to the suspense my father must have undergone when I saw the deep passion of relief with which he welcomed me to him still in life. I am always glad to remember that, controlling a feeling which, since Miles left me, made me loath to look upon the familiar scenes of childhood, and long to fly where the sudden sight or touch of his belongings could not torment me. I was my father's constant and devoted companion for some months now. And even Nell's ministrations, exquisitely sympathetic and tactful as they were, seemed not so restful to him, strangely, as my mere presence. There would be long spaces with hardly a word exchanged as we rode side by side through the plantation or sat in the library. 'Twas enough if there passed between us an occasional glance of agreement on subjects discussed by others, an appreciative acquaintance with favorite authors, a hand-clasp now and then. Yet of a sudden, one day, he said abruptly:

"This will not do—no, not at all. 'Tis mere selfishness on my part. Go, my son, for a while to Europe, or where you will. Only return to me your old self, mind and body, as far as may be. 'Twill give me peace, perhaps, to find that you have gained it. For our loss, '*Durum; sed fit, levius patientia quic quid est nefas corrigere*;' and knowing that '*una nox manet omnes*,

et via lethi semel calcamda,' we may await with tranquillity our own time for sleep, when we too shall say good-night to earth." And he so over-ruled and bore down all my objections to leaving him that I presently made my arrangements for a foreign tour.

'Twas the afternoon before my setting out that I had my first sight of Dorothy Winter since the tragedy which had so changed our lives. The shock had confined her to her chamber with an illness at the time of Miles' interment, nor had she been to Woodhurst since, though Nell had driven over many times to see her. She came this day, and I heard the sound of women's sobs in the upper rooms which drove me downstairs. And there I presently saw her through the open door, her slight form draped in mourning, pass swiftly through the hall, looking neither to right nor left, and enter her coach, which drove away, stopping, perhaps, at our burial ground, but this I do not know, for I did not look.

I was abroad now for three or four years, wandering hither and thither, only to discover that black care had followed me, and with him two ghosts. One gone forever from earth, the other still in the flesh, both equally disquieting in their constant presence. Until I decided at last that they might best be laid at home, or, if not, there was work there to be done at least. My passage was engaged, when a note informed me that some of the Sherwood family from Kent, relatives of Cousin Betty, of whom I have spoken before, were in Liverpool and desired to see me. It appeared that the ladies, an aunt and niece, the pretty child I had known grown to womanhood, intended making a long-promised visit to their kinsfolk in Carolina.

"And we should be glad to have Mr. Anthony Ashley's company and protection on our voyage," said Miss Sherwood, "if it is no inconvenience to him."

"Madam, it will be both an honor and a pleasure," I assured her; but in the ungraciousness of my secret depression, felt that I would rather have had no lady of my acquaintance on board whom it was my duty to serve and attend. Their timidity about the dangerous new steam-boats, and the fact that the latter went first to New York, caused me to prefer a schooner for Charleston direct; and we were quite thirty days on the way. I have often felt ashamed since then when I remember the feminine perception which, in a very short space of that time, divined my morbid despondency, and with gentle tact and girlish delicacy almost soothed it into peace. In the blindness of my selfish depression I was insensible to the sympathy accorded me by sweet Alice Sherwood during long hours together on the deck, and 'twas not until we were riding off Charleston bar, the tide not serving us to cross it yet, that I chanced to notice her bright complexion a little dimmed by the fatigue of the voyage.

"We must hope that your niece will not lose her pretty English color in our climate, Miss Sherwood," said I to this lady, reclining on a low chair, still weak from recent sea-sickness.

"'Tis but the monotony of the voyage, I fancy," she replied, smiling fondly at her niece. "We need only to feel the solid ground under foot once more to recover vigor."

And just then the captain came up with a grave face. "This is ill news from town, Mr. Ashley and ladies," said he, "which I am bound to tell you at once.

There has some fever broken out there, brought from the Indies in a fruit bark three weeks ago; and many have died. I will not leave the ship at all; freight can be unloaded from a distance, and of course, after unloading, my passengers can be taken to some other port."

The ladies looked at me, but quietly, and nothing startled.

"I should recommend, nay, strongly urge, your following the captain's advice," said I, "you being strangers and unacclimated. For myself, I must land, as I find by this note that my father has driven down from the country to meet me, has been in town since last night, and though a little exhausted from the heat to-day, will have the coach in readiness to set off for Woodhurst at once, so as to avoid my spending the night in town, which, for one who has been away, is thought not well."

"'Tis a foolish seeming thing," said Miss Sherwood, "to wait all these years to visit my relatives, and then cross the ocean and back again without a sight of their faces. If 'twas myself alone—I have been in India, and when there was cholera there too—but Alice——"

"Do not be afraid for me," she cried. "I would much, much rather stay."

"No, do not," the captain advised. And I once more urged their return to England, or better, a visit to New York until frost. I repeated what I had said in Liverpool, that 'twas not wise to choose the summer-time for visiting warm latitudes.

"I have been in much warmer without inconvenience," declared Miss Sherwood. In fine, the more I opposed their landing, the more their minds were fixed upon it.

"I think he wants to be rid of us, Alice," said Miss Sherwood at length.

"It looks like it, aunt," said Alice, smiling.

"Then," said I, "since you will run the risk, let it be as slight as possible. You need not sleep in the city, but go right on with us to Woodhurst, where Cousin Betty will be too glad to hold you until frost allows you to visit town."

Thus opportunity of repaying a little of their kind hospitality of former days in England was promised me. And as soon as possible we and our luggage were carried to town and taken to the Planters'. And there I found my father in bed with some indisposition, slight, he said, but sufficient to detain us in the city over night.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF the Sherwood family these ladies were to visit, but one representative had remained in town after sickness had broken out, and he was there expressly to meet and conduct them to his country-house. He protested against their change of plan, but after a little talk with Miss Sherwood yielded courteously to her intention of first visiting our Cousin Betty at Woodhurst, which he conceded to be a cooler place at this season. When he took his leave of us to set off at once, I still thought we too should certainly start for Woodhurst that day.

But about noon my father seemed worse, and Miss Sherwood merely echoed my own fears when she said: "As he has some fever, Anthony, 'twould be well to have the doctor look at him." The force at the hotel was so small, guests being few at this time and many of the waiters dismissed or withdrawn by their owners from the city, I went out myself to seek a physician, leaving her in charge.

The streets, so gay and animated on the cool winter day I had last walked them, with handsome equipages, brisk pedestrians, and numerous lusty-lunged hucksters, were now, under the brilliant July sun, as a city of the dead. The dust lay thick everywhere, for 'twas a long drouth and the watering-carts had ceased going out; vines and window-plants looked dry and dead; grass

was growing neglected about the thoroughfares; only the drug and necessary provision shops were open for business; the licensed stands for drays were deserted; the buzzards seemed to flap their wings ominously about the silent market-place; foot-passengers were few, most of them wearing the same dreary or anxious look, except, indeed, the unreflecting negroes, who were, besides, comparatively exempt from danger, the disease appearing to pass them. Of vehicles there were few but the doctors' gigs, driven swiftly by their black boys here and there, and an occasional hearse with a gloomy little procession wending its way to some city church-yard. Our family physician was not in his office, but, by good fortune, I met him turning out of Lightwood Alley. He bade me get in with him, telling his driver to mount behind. After an examination, careful but rapid, he being much pressed for time, he said to me in the hall-way outside my father's door:

"'Tis the fever, certainly, though not a bad case. Careful nursing is what is needed above all. Is this lady——" glancing at Miss Sherwood, who stood beside me.

"A connection," she replied, "and most anxious to assist. I have had much experience in sick-nursing."

I opened my lips to protest, but the doctor was already giving his orders, and quickly drove away. Then I said, "I have sent to our coachman at the Rising Sun to harness up at once. He is a careful old fellow, Miss Sherwood, and 'tis an easy day's journey to Woodhurst. As you are strangers, the sooner you are there the better."

"My dear Anthony," she said, turning a pleasant,

motherly face, very like Cousin Betty's, to me, and putting a kind hand on mine, "do you think I have known you so long and like you so much to desert you here, with your father sick and no woman on hand? No, please God, I will stay and help nurse him. And Alice——"

"Will stay too," declared the girl, who had come up, putting her hand in her aunt's.

"You see," said the latter, smiling, "since Alice's parents were taken away our fortunes are the same, and we stand or fall together."

And the good little woman went presently to work, and was a tower of strength to me, all inexperienced as I was in illness, for the next five or six weary days and nights. The fever left my father about the third day, and though terribly weak, the doctor found his condition favorable. 'Twas at the end of the week that my kind fellow-nurse sickened, was forced to keep her bed, and notwithstanding all skill and care and her niece's devotion, yielded in a fearfully short time to the destroyer, and was laid to rest, almost within sight of my father's window, in the Huguenot church-yard, just across the street, where, years afterward, my children were taught to read reverently on her simple headstone how "Elizabeth Sherwood had died of Stranger's Fever," and how

"Praises on tombs are titles vainly spent;

A man's good name is his best monument."

My father asked several times for his good nurse, when I judged it best to say she was tired out; and when she left us, I told him as calmly as might be that she was better, but could not come to him.

"No, no, certainly not," said he; "she has done her

part and should have rest and cheerfulness now. But I may sometimes see Alice, perhaps; her sweet face is a tonic in itself."

I would have evaded complying with this request, but a maid who was in the room at the time took it upon herself to repeat his desire to Alice Sherwood; and that afternoon, when I was out, she rose up from under the burden of her great grief for the aunt who was more than a mother, and, laying aside her black robes for a white gown, went to him and gave him the comfort of her soothing ministrations and gentle voice and manner, practising, as she must, a marvellous self-control for one so young. At this very time the doctor, who was driving me to a friend's house, was sounding her praises.

"Did one ever see," he cried, "such courage and devotion and self-forgetfulness, with such a deep sense of loss? A brave girl. But she may be sick. She should be sent off as soon as possible. Your father, too, as soon as he is able to travel."

"The coach," said I, "was sent home some days ago to bring back my cousin Betty Sherwood, who will take the young lady at once to Woodhurst."

"You may take your father too," said the doctor, alighting, "if he is careful now—very careful, but you understand the necessity, of course."

I found my patient better and brighter for his visitant, but how hard for her that he should send his grateful respects to her aunt! I touched her fair hand in a broken attempt to express my pity, and sympathy, and gratitude; but she turned away hastily with a painful sob.

I had a note now from Cousin Betty by the hand of

an acquaintance, saying that she had been prevented starting immediately by a rheumatic attack which had confined her to bed.

"It came, I think, my dear, from going down to the quarters in the rain to make Daddy Jake take his dose of Flugger's Pills. He is an obstinate old fellow, and will only swallow them when I stand over him. He fed the pigeons with the last and killed five. I will be well enough to reach you in a day or two, I hope, and in the mean time am glad to hear your father is on the road to health. My love to him and respects to Elizabeth Sherwood and Alice, and I am most anxious to meet them. Be sure and keep your rooms well sprinkled with Aromatick Vinegar, and a piece of camphire worn about the neck is a good preventative."

'Twas nearly a week before she could come to us, and in this while my dear father, who had been well enough to sit up, had from some trifling imprudence a relapse and was very ill. As I watched him my heart grew leaden, the more so when a heavy shower of rain fell one afternoon and sensibly cooled the sultry air, and I saw the doctor's look of gravity, for well we both knew that any sudden change of temperature was fatal in this sickness. When the case became so serious, one of the good Sisters of Mercy replaced Alice Sherwood in his room, but the girl had still come to his bedside now and then with a bright word or smile.

"A sweet girl," he said faintly, following her out on the last of these occasions with his gaze, so keen, alas! until dimmed by weakness. "Such a woman would have great power to heal a wound, Anthony."

"Unless 'twere still open and bleeding," said I, as to my own soul.

"'Twill close, my dear, twill close," very softly, "though I may not deny, for well I know there is painful throbbing under the scar long after. But," looking earnestly at me, "there is abundant future strength in those eyes which they tell me are like my own." He fell asleep shortly after, and when he waked his mind was not clear, for he thought himself back in old student days, and spoke to his class-mates and repeated Latin college songs. Then it changed, and he called in tones of moving tenderness, "Amaryllis, love," and passionately: "My soul, the very eyes of me, Amaryllis, dearest." I knew that was not my mother's name. Toward morning, when the air felt damp and chilly, he smiled at me, faintly conscious once more, and whispered: "Kiss me, Anthony, my dear son, my very self." And presently, while I still held my dear father in my arms, he had gone away from me.

'Twas needful to forget myself that I might support our poor Cousin Betty under the shock of so violent and unexpected a blow which awaited her on her coming.

"O Anthony! Anthony!" she cried, her head on my shoulder, "how kind he was always, how good and kind! Was ever any one like him? But for him I would have died in my young days, when I lost my Arthur——" and her own pitiful little romance of long ago came out—when her lover was drowned in a storm at sea and my father was the kindest of brothers to her.

Alice Sherwood was a great comfort here with little affectionate attentions to our cousin and weeping with

her over their common griefs. I sent them both to the country at once, in charge of Jupiter, and followed myself later to Woodhurst, where we laid my father under the live-oaks beside our Miles.

For this winter we kept Alice Sherwood, her married brothers in England not insisting on her speedy return. And if she went off at intervals to visit other kinsfolk, 'twas understood that she always come back to Woodhurst, where Cousin Betty and Nell seemed to fill the vacant place in her heart left by her aunt. But for this loss, which made quiet congenial to her, our plantation would have been at this time but a dull place for a young girl. When I had time to notice, for I kept myself always busy, I was glad to see that the fresh English roses in her cheeks had not faded in our climate, but after their temporary drooping bloomed again brightly.

Clergymen of the family religion, as I have mentioned once before, officiated but seldom in St. Stephen's at that period. And for weeks, and even months, we scarcely saw one. It chanced, therefore, that during this time of mourning we actually had more of the friendly society of the learned Bishop England, of the Catholic Church, who, travelling in the country, stopped at Woodhurst as formerly, where he was a valued intimate of my father's. It hardly surprised me, then, when our Eleanor, who had derived much comfort from his kindly talk, said to me one day:

"Anthony, if there were anything you thought it right to do, no disapproval or opposition would prevent you, would it, brother?" I apprehended her meaning, from previous indications I had noted, and answered with my arm around her:

"My dearest Nell, I am as liberal as our father was, I hope, and in whatever you may earnestly think it right to do, you shall have your brother's support."

At the same time, I well knew the trial it would be to so sensitive a spirit to bear the indignant protests and coldness at her defection from their ranks of every other relative and friend, even of Cousin Betty, after her pleadings and tears had proved useless.

Alice Sherwood was filled with wonder at her course, confiding to me her surprise that any one belonging to a body springing from that fortunate enough to name the King of England Head of the Church and Defender of the Faith could relinquish that privilege. My descendants will remember that I speak of days when Ritualism was not, and the astonishing changes of the last fifty years in her own church had not yet caused Cousin Betty to lift hands of horrified protest on being taken in later times to one of that communion in a Northern city.

Her own people in their quiet, conservative life in plantation or city had innocently and comfortably gone on practising ways established and brought over under Charles the Second, and cultivated in their children a great horror of what they considered the ceremonial entirely forbidden to them.

One good effect this ordeal of Nell's had in bringing into bright relief the loyalty and honest devotion of Tom Broadacre.

"'Tis a shame," he cried, "the way they all trouble her. She's an angel, whatever she chooses to call herself on earth, and if she'll let me, I'll be glad to go with her to any part of heaven she prefers."

He was, on one excuse or other, continually in our

neighborhood now, and so stanch was his support and so unobtrusive and patient his homage that, Richard Northcote being removed and his name only remembered for evil, Nell came to depend upon this trusty adherent more and more. Perhaps, too, his demeanor was now adjusted, with more tact than we had given him credit for, to what he knew to be her feelings. So when he offered her once more a life-long devotion, 'twas not refused. And our Eleanor's change of faith was followed by a move to Edisto with him, there to found a home which it lightened my heavy heart then and thereafter to know was a very happy one.

CHAPTER XX

AFTER my father's death a letter of earnest sympathy had come to Eleanor from Switzerland, where Dorothy Winter was travelling that season with her parents. They were abroad until late, and the next year came a magnificent wedding-gift for Nell from New York, where Dorothy was with relatives. The following summer she was at the White Sulphur, and 'twas not until that winter was half-spent that I heard of her return to Fairview. I knew we must meet sooner or later, with full consciousness on both sides of what was past and gone, yet I was cowardly enough to shrink from it. For which reason I devised all possible excuses for sending Doubleday, permanently with me now, in my stead to Buzzard's Roost, the road to which crossed the bridle-path from Fairview. Also I deferred making the ceremonious call which appearances exacted of me.

'Twas one afternoon when the house was very quiet, the dinner-hour long past, the servants in kitchen or quarters, Cousin Betty with Alice gone on a few days' visit to Nell's, and I, reluctant to go out again after a busy morning's riding, had thrown open the door between the silent library and dining-room and was pacing up and down the length of the two rooms. As I turned at the end of the latter, 'twas suddenly to face Dorothy Winter in the door-way.

"How like your father you seemed then," she said softly, "and now, with those serious eyes, how like *him*," glancing up at the old picture of the Landgrave. I was silent at this unfortunate allusion, remembering the fatal letters taken from behind that portrait—nay, I will speak out bravely. Was it not rather the sight of that incomparable face and sound of her voice which struck me dumb and almost deprived me, as of old, of all sense and courage? She advanced, holding out a slim hand. "Have you no welcome for me, Anthony? I startled you, perhaps. The hall-door was open, so I came in to look for some one. Did you not hear my coach-wheels on the avenue?"

I took her hand formally, to lead her into the other room, for I could not bear to speak to her just there with a vision crossing me of how Miles once looked and spoke on that spot. In the library I drew an arm-chair to the fire for my guest.

"Cousin Betty is away with Eleanor," I said then. "I am sorry to be the only one to receive you."

"And I am not," she said quite clearly, and still standing, her hand on the chair-back. "For 'tis with you, Anthony, I have wanted for, oh, so long to speak."

She looked paler than formerly, and taller too, in her dark fur-trimmed gown, but her eyes were lustrous as of old and her grace and beauty beyond any other woman's. Whether 'twas accidental or not I cannot tell, but at her girdle shone the gold and sapphire vinaigrette I had once given her.

"Anthony," she said, her gaze intent upon my sombre face, "why am I shut out of your sorrow? Was I so unworthy to mourn, or were the few lines I sent you

long ago unfit to be noticed? Your Cousin Betty and Nell, and even your father, in their own grief, could spare me a little pity, and why not you? Did you not believe I suffered?"

"That I cannot tell," I answered her in a low voice, "but there is suffering retributive—deserved."

She drew in her breath sharply; then, "How do you mean?" she asked slowly. Heaven knows I had not intended to reproach her, but this interview was not of my seeking, and I was hard-pressed, fighting more myself than her.

"Did you think they quarrelled over cards?" I asked.

"'Twas so reported," she answered steadily, but her face turned so white I stepped closer to her, thinking she would fall.

"And you believed it?"

"If I did not entirely," she answered, her head proudly erect, though her lips were trembling, "if I was tortured with misgivings, 'twas not through him, your generous, noble brother. You may see what he last wrote me." She drew a folded billet from her bosom with a sort of defiance and held it to me. I took the paper and read in my brother's handwriting:

"DEAR LOVE;—If this is read by you, I would not have you think I risked a life belonging to you in any lesser cause than yours. 'Tis no blame to your beauty that it should attract admiration; but to resent presumption in the matter is my privilege, otherwise I were not fit for the happiness of being your protector, which I have been hoping for, so soon.

"If 'tis never to be, why then I beg you to remem-

ber there is no slightest cause for self-reproach on your part. Only there was nothing else possible but this encounter to him who signs himself, in life and death,

“Your MILES.”

Her eyes were still on my face as she took the paper from me and restored it to its place. “Well?” she said, at length breaking the silence.

“Such generous confidence,” I answered bitterly, “might well have won more loyalty.”

She started, putting her hand to her heart quickly, as if I had stabbed her.

“I have always been spoiled, perhaps,” she said hurriedly, “and he gave me great freedom always during our engagement. If he had been more masterful and exacting, like—like some others, it might have been better for us both. And,” she cried, answering my look, “you think that I abused my freedom. What is it that you think, Anthony? Why do you keep me so in the dark?”

For answer I drew in my turn some papers from an inner pocket. 'Twas the package found behind the portrait, which I carried with me, possibly as an antidote to some fierce emotions that seized upon me sometimes. As I laid them on a table, she approached and lifted first one and then another. The deep flush which overspread her face died away, leaving her white as before. Then, laying them down, she touched her own lightly with a finger while she slowly said:

“I see now there is small hope of leniency. But, Anthony, if other, kinder eyes than yours, so dark and stern, looked into these, they might not find cause so great for harshness. What is there deeper here than a

foolish girl's coquetry or worse than a vain love of admiration?"

"The pretty faults that cost a man his life." Oh, could those beautiful proud eyes look so through great tears falling slowly on her cheeks?

"For God's sake," I cried hurriedly, "let us talk no more of this. The past is forever past, and we but wound each other and ourselves."

"No, we must talk," she rejoined, after a moment or two. "I will have you hear me, Anthony, for I think you are unjust. If 'twere to Miles I spoke I would say that a fault is not a crime and that 'tis heavily visited by a tragedy. I might say, too, that Richard Northcote's jealous enmity to both of you could easily have found excuse for a feud in any matter. Men fight every day, you know, for trifles; a look, a word, a bet—anything. He had grown reckless in his loss of fortune, and because—because I had long before then been obliged to check him. And—and he had even told me he meant to quarrel with you for—some fancied injury. But in so far as I am responsible, oh, believe that my grief has been heavy enough to satisfy even you and much more Miles, even—for anything else that—that was not my fault. And if he could see me now, he would know that I meant to make him a devoted, faithful wife. But he is gone, nor would that noble heart will that mine should always suffer. So I come to you, Anthony, appealing against your hard judgment for forgiveness, and even for the friendship that has always been so dear."

Were these Dorothy Winter's little hands laid on my arm and her great eyes softened in appeal?

"Anthony," the girl went on, "can you so easily for-

get our childhood days together, and—later times, when we have—yes, all of us, and I too, looked for your approval in everything?”

O Dorothy, Dorothy, if my brows were bent 'twas in the fierce inward conflict which I had thought over long ago, and if I stood unmoved while my every pulse thrilled beneath your touch, 'twas that I might not fall at your feet. I contrived to say somehow:

“As far as you may need it, my free forgiveness is yours, and we may be friends, I think—but apart. For our old close intimacy 'tis impossible. There is a shade stands between us.”

She let her hands fall slowly to her side, but as though something in my voice or face startled her, looked searchingly at me. Then she spoke:

“You are very cruel, Anthony. But you have suffered and, I see, still suffer.”

She replaced her hat, took her muff from the table, and passed slowly into the hall without another word. I followed mechanically to the front steps, where her coach waited. Our Cæsar was passing at the moment, and she said some trifling thing to the man, with so much of her old playful manner that I might have thought our interview a dream if I had not, at the moment, caught sight of her face under the shade of her hat. She barely touched my fingers as I stood bowing low to hand her in, but she turned to me the moment after and murmured:

“Good-by, then, Anthony, and God bless you always.”

“Madam,” said I hoarsely, “may God bless you and grant you happiness, and—and forgive me if I am wrong.”

Then the coach rolled on, and I would not have cared if I had been down among the wheels and the horses' hoofs. When, a while after, I was shut into my room, I went up to Miles' picture, with his own frank, honest look, that hung always at the head of my bed, over the carved evangelist's which watched—such ages ago—over two curly boyish heads sleeping on one pillow beneath; and I said, with my hand on the painted breast: "If you know it all now, Miles, you will know that I have atoned."

I heard soon that the Winters had left the neighborhood again on some extended tour, and they were but seldom at home now, Fairview being in charge of an excellent overseer and their only child and idol preferring to travel. Rumors of her brilliant successes and praises of her charms floated to us from the distant city or watering-place where she chanced to be from time to time.

As for us, our home was very quiet, being still the house of mourning, and 'twas very good of a young creature like Alice Sherwood to decline invitations that she had and cut short occasional visits to town that she might cheer Cousin Betty's loneliness and brighten Woodhurst. 'Twas wonderful, too, how much interest she, a stranger, took in the multifarious duties of a large plantation, and how much she thus lightened the burden for the lady of the house.

"How can I ever do without her?" cried Cousin Betty. "I cannot live without this daughter, now Nell has left me. I do not mean to let her go back."

Indeed, there was no reason she should, the girl being very much her own mistress, independent as to her little income, and having a close affection for this, her

relative. 'Twas much to know that I did not leave Cousin Betty quite alone during my many absences and busy occupations. As for the negroes at the house or quarters, they adored the girl, calling her "Miss Rosebud," in allusion to her pretty red and white color, and quitting any occupation gladly to run her errands or hold her pony. And her pliant figure on that pony became a familiar feature in the landscape, riding in a way a little stiff, perhaps, or so it seemed to me, accustomed to one sitting her horse in Southern fashion, than whom Diana's self could scarce have been more radiant. And her sweet face was an ornament to our parlor, evenings, which it seemed absurd to think of sparing, and as 'twas not I who instigated an occasional letter of recall from England, Cousin Betty's look of something like reproach toward me on such occasions was surely undeserved.

She had been with us about two years, when one rainy afternoon I met, as I was riding homeward, Castor coming with our mail from the coach. He gave me mine at the house door, being proud that through his skill in writing he could assort the mail. I took mine to my room, having many unsocial, churlish habits in these days. After various business and other epistles were disposed of I took up one, at sight of which my heart stood still. 'Twas on the pale-tinted, faintly perfumed paper women used then, and on the seal the well-remembered arrow which pierced my soul once more. Dorothy Winter wrote to me:

"I have been told of the good fortune you are anticipating, Anthony, and of the sweet young English girl you have won as your bride. Your old playmate

must not be the last to hope and pray that she will bring you all happiness. My earnest good wishes are yours and hers.

“There is something I wish to tell you. I am not sure if this is right, but I have always been wilful, you know. If such disclosures are an offence to womanly delicacy in a general way, as we are taught, the circumstances in this case being infrequent may excuse it, perhaps, especially when 'tis made to you and you alone.

“I am not sure if you have heard that Richard Northcote has been practising law in this city for some time and very successfully. Also that, in one way or other—some people blame these ways—he has been prominent in politics, and is altogether looked on as a brilliant young man in circles where I am a frequent guest. I need not say that I have avoided him, but his determination is such that he sought opportunities of approaching me when the presence of strangers to our history prevented any rebuff more marked than coldness. Then his chance coming at last he made—too impetuously to be checked—the proffer of an eternal and ardent devotion, excused his very wickedness on that plea. But why need I repeat him, knowing that a man, even in ordinary cases, feels a contempt for the utterance of another man's passion?

“Enough that I was compelled to listen, and—we have always acknowledged his cleverness and gifts—so impassioned were his pleadings, so overwhelmingly and painfully earnest he seemed, that some women—I say some women—would have felt here their temptation to repay a deep wound given by a friend. For, Anthony, you know my spirit is not one to be re-

strained by a mere regard for the world's opinion. Nor in this matter did I think chiefly of him who has gone. 'Twas of you I thought, and of you only. And when I sent him away with words he will not forget, and after which, I think, he will never willingly see me again, 'twas on your account alone. 'Tis a satisfaction I choose for myself to know this and tell it to you, and repeat it, about your enemy.

"And now, perhaps, you have heard that I am to be married very soon. The gentleman is much older than myself, learned, and of excellent parts. He has been appointed minister to Spain, and we sail immediately after the ceremony, to be abroad some time. Notwithstanding our last interview, I cling to the belief that I have your good wishes, and that I may sign myself, for the last time,

"Your friend,

"DOROTHY WINTER."

A fine rain was falling at intervals, but I could not stay in the house, and went to the stables to have my saddle, just taken from one animal, put on another, and rode forth again, leaving word that I would not be at home for the evening. Away into the night I rode, along country lanes that were as familiar to my horse and me in the darkness as in the light. I can recall now the trivial impressions of that ride, unconscious of them then. The drip of the soft, sprinkling rain from the leaves, the rustle of unseen animal or reptile gliding away from the horse's hoofs, the locusts' monotonous chirping, the dismal calling from tree-tops of owl or night-hawk, the odors of the moist soil or vegetation. Many miles I rode, the wet soaking into

saddle and clothing, as indifferent to that as to everything else; and the moon had risen high over Woodhurst when I returned, and gave out a dull and hastily obscured beam as she struggled and fought her way through the masses of black and shifting clouds. My faithful sleepy Castor was the only one still up about the place to take my horse. When I lay down, then, wearied out in mind and body, 'twas after burying forever the dead past.

Some months after Cousin Betty had excitedly read from the paper at the breakfast-table of the grand wedding and departure for Madrid of the minister to Spain and his bride, the beautiful Miss Winter. Alice Sherwood timidly declared that her people were now expecting her home. Then Cousin Betty spoke her mind to me in private, and from hopes she held out I ventured to ask our fair guest to remain at Woodhurst as its mistress. 'Tis a piece of good fortune, of which I knew my unworthiness, that this lovely English rose should have bloomed for me. That the fragrance of her virtues should have filled my home, I have been always grateful.

A better wife and mother of his children no man ever had, and I trust I made her life a happy one. But when a keen love of adventure and certain spirit of soldiership, learned from Colonel Milton perhaps, and inherited besides, drove me into the Mexican War as captain, and to be wounded twice, she let me go with a brave smile. Nor did I know, until the war was over, the agony of dread and cruel suspense she suffered then. 'Twas after this, when her health failed and the doctor urgently advised a more bracing climate, that I left Woodhurst, against her self-sacrific-

ing protest, and went to live North. The plantation was leased, Doubleday retaining the position of overseer, and Cousin Betty, who dreaded cold, remained part of the year with Eleanor and part with us and our children, to whom she was a more abject slave than my Castor even. My wife's health drooped at each attempt to return to a southern latitude, and at last both my home and pecuniary investments were made in the North. The latter prospered beyond expectations.

Our eldest son, Miles, was a tall and manly fellow when his mother died in England, where I was with her on a visit. She left me with sacred words of farewell and blessing on her lips which I may not repeat. It could hardly have wronged her that my sole secret treasure was a fan with trifling words once upon it erased, and in their stead a sketch, in the making of which I had some skill, of a face often before me in dreams. That beautiful face had long been cold in death before my wife left me.

I was abroad when the civil war broke out, and my sons in the North. Of course my whole heart was with my State, and they, sharing my devotion, would no sooner have borne arms against her than they would have committed matricide.

When that unequal conflict was over I hastened down to see my people, and alas! alas! for them and Woodhurst. But I found a courage in misfortune: a cheerful taking up of unaccustomed burdens after the first agony was over which was admirable. My slaves were scattered in all directions, away from the pillaged and devastated plantation. A few very old ones stayed in their cabins, among them Jupiter, a veritable

patriarch. The old fellow wept on seeing "Mas' Anthony," and would fain have followed me, but at his age 'twas impossible. I persuaded Nell and her husband to leave their Edisto place—a heap of ruins—and take charge of Woodhurst with a hired force. 'Twas a comfort to leave the old place, though so changed, with one of the family.

But 'tis not of that Woodhurst I dream in my long home-sickness of many years. 'Tis of the busy, thriving plantation of old with its numerous contented slaves. 'Tis of the pine forests through which wandered two happy-hearted boys and their train of merry, noisy little darkies. The breeze moves the boughs to and fro, their aromatic smell fills the air, the sunshine glitters on leaf and flower, the birds chirp and flutter, a squirrel runs up a tree, bare feet go splashing through the creek, there is great laughing and shouting. "Anthony! Anthony!" my brother calls.

No, 'tis not his voice, but I shall lie at his side once more, before very long, *ad Ripas Fluvii Santee*.

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